Closure sought on dark chapter in CPP history

Story below, COL. 1

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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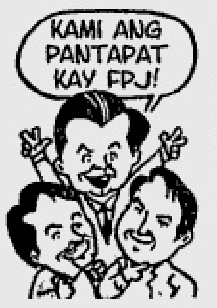
Lakas plans to field more show biz stars


KAMI ANG PANTAPAT KAY FPJ!

By J. L. Javellana

LIKE the opposition, the ruling Lakas-CMD can't seem to have enough of show biz personalities on its roster of candidates for the May elections. Not content with

LAKAS/ A4

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Actor Miko Sotto dies in condominium fall** METRO /A16
- **Hopes of finding more quake survivors fade** WORLD /A7
- **Blind lawyer joins Roco** NEWS /A2

Noli agrees to be GMA running mate

By Christine O. Avendaño

SEN. Noli de Castro, a popular TV broadcaster, yesterday accepted the offer of President Macapagal-Arroyo to run as her vice president in the May elections, boosting her chances of keeping her job for another six years.

"I am confirming that I have accepted the invitation of Her Excellency, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to be her running mate in the forthcoming national elections in May 2004," De Castro said in a brief statement.

"I believe that as a vice presidential candidate, I would be of service in unifying our nation and help to uplift the lives of our countrymen," said the newsreader-turned-senator who topped the 2001 senatorial elections and has ranked among the front-runners in opinion polls.

"I am responding to the call of the Filipino people for national unity and meaningful governance in these difficult times," he added.

Ms Macapagal's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Ms Macapagal was "gladdened" by De Castro's decision.

"The President has always considered Senator Noli de Castro an ally in the cause of national unity and good governance. She is gladdened by his decision," Bunye said in a statement.

Some analysts said De Castro's name recognition could help lift the low opinion poll ratings of Ms Macapagal, who is seen as lacking the charisma of other candidates.

But other analysts said it remained to be seen whether De Castro would win votes for Ms Macapagal.

"It's too early to tell, but GMA has a good beginning. She was able to get a vice presidential candidate who has strong mass appeal," said political analyst Antonio Gatmaitan.

De Castro anchored several top-rated news programs, including "TV Patrol," "Magandang Gabi Bayan" and "Kabayan" for more than a decade, giving him a platform from which to launch his political career in 2001.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said he was not surprised by De Castro's ac-

NOLI/ A3

DE CASTRO JESS YUSON

OPPOSITION Sen. Panfilo Lacson displays his application for a certificate of candidacy to formalize his quest for the presidency in the May elections. ERIK ARAZAS

Lacson splits opposition

Senator files bid as LDP standard-bearer

By Christine O. Avendaño, Martin P. Marfil and Carlito Pablo

SEN. Panfilo Lacson filed his certificate of candidacy for president with the Commission on Elections yesterday, effectively dividing the opposition.

Actor Fernando Poe Jr. earlier accepted the nomination of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) to be its standard-bearer. The KNP includes the country's biggest opposition party, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

"Who is the true opposition?" Lacson asked hundreds of noisy supporters in red T-shirts outside the Comelec headquarters as they welcomed him with a brass band and a dancing Chinese dragon.

He told the crowd: "You're with me in my plan to rescue our country from the claws of criminality, from too [many] anomalies in our government."

Hours after he became candidate No. 32 for president, Lacson, a former national police chief popular in the small but influential ethnic Chinese community, declared he was the LDP's official standard-bearer.

The party is split into two factions—the camp of Makati Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino, the secretary general, which is supporting Lacson, and the group of Sen. Edgardo Angara, the chair and president, which is rooting for Poe.

That rift may help President Macapagal-Arroyo against Poe at the ballot box on May 10, but she still faces a sizable challenge from Raul Roco, a former education secretary.

Although the Comelec has yet to make a final ruling on who should be considered the official candidates of LDP, Lacson said at a news conference that Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos had announced that he was the official presidential candidate of the party.

"It came directly from him (Abalos) and surely, the photographers and camera men who were there in the office where I filed my COC heard it," Lacson said. "I'd like to repeat that I am the official candidate of the LDP."

But Abalos belied Lacson's claim. "There is going to be a hearing tomorrow. Everybody knows about that. Let us not twist facts," he said.

Lacson said there was no turning back.

LACSON/ A5

Closure sought on dark chapter in CPP history

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

(Last of five parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

AT A PUBLIC forum on Feb. 15 in Intramuros, Manila, a group in the audience objected to the airing by survivors and their friends of the horrors of the purges conducted by the Communist Party of the Philippines in the 1980s.

Furious, an official of a militant group rose and said the Dutch Embassy-sponsored forum on the CPP anti-infiltration campaigns and their implications on human rights was aiding the military.

"We don't want the government to use us to destroy the revolutionary movement," activist Carol Pagaduan-Araullo told the audience gathered in a high-ceilinged room at the San Agustin Museum where centuries-old icons, paintings and other church memorabilia were on display.

A number agreed with her position, effectively dividing the audience into those in favor of remembering the witch-hunts and those against.

The incident highlighted the challenges that stand in the way of closure to a dark period in the history of the Philippine underground revolutionary movement.

For many bereaved families, closure means recovering the remains of their loved ones for a proper burial.

Take the case of Felisa C. Herrera, a resident of southern California in the United States, whose son Lionel was executed by his comrades in Davao City in 1985.

"My family and I have accepted his fate, but until such time that we recover his remains and give him a decent burial, we have no closure at all," Herrera wrote the Commission on Human Rights on March 29, 2002.

Before seeking the help of the CHR, Herrera traveled to Davao in July 2001 to look for her son's remains. She had received a call from someone who claimed to be a former communist rebel and who informed her that Lionel was buried in Ma-a District.

"He gave me directions but he was not going to show up," the mother said. "[He said the site] was easy to locate because there was an excavation at the side of the mountain … apparently for some kind of construction.

"So the next day, I went to that place

CLOSURE/ A6

Erap insists he remains President

By Armand N. Nocum

IN A MOVE that could affect his trip to the United States, Joseph Estrada insisted yesterday that he remained the President when he wrote a "personal undertaking" submitting himself to the authority of the Sandiganbayan.

The anti-graft court has allowed the deposed President, who is detained on plunder and corruption charges, to leave for the United States in the first week of January for treatment of his arthritic knees.

In its Dec. 23 resolution, the special division set conditions for Estrada's travel abroad, including the need for him to draft a personal undertaking saying "he is recognizing the authority of the court, over his person and over the cases filed against him."

The Sandiganbayan also required Estrada to promise to return, not go to places other than the United States, foot the bill for four policemen assigned to guard him, and leave within 10 days after receiving the resolution.

As expected, government prosecutors filed a motion for reconsideration, noting that the Sandiganbayan "gravely erred in ruling that the alleged deterioration" of Estrada's health justified his travel abroad. But the Department of Foreign Affairs issued the deposed President a regular passport.

Working with his personal and court-appointed lawyers, Estrada opted to use the word "submit" and not "recognize" to dramatize his claim to the presidency.

"I have been advised that, at this

ERAP/ A4

₱130-M museum goes beyond Rizal's heroism

By Volt Contreras

IF JOSE Rizal were alive today, he would probably be wowed by this P130-million museum put up in his honor as part of the tourism revival sweeping Manila's Old Intramuros District.

For the recently unveiled Bagumbayan Light and Sound Museum, which features up to 140 mannequins in dramatic, historical tableaux, offers not just another textbook version of the national hero's life and times. It also seeks to evoke among Filipinos the Rizalian spirit of "breaking psychological walls," according to the museum's chief builder, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon.

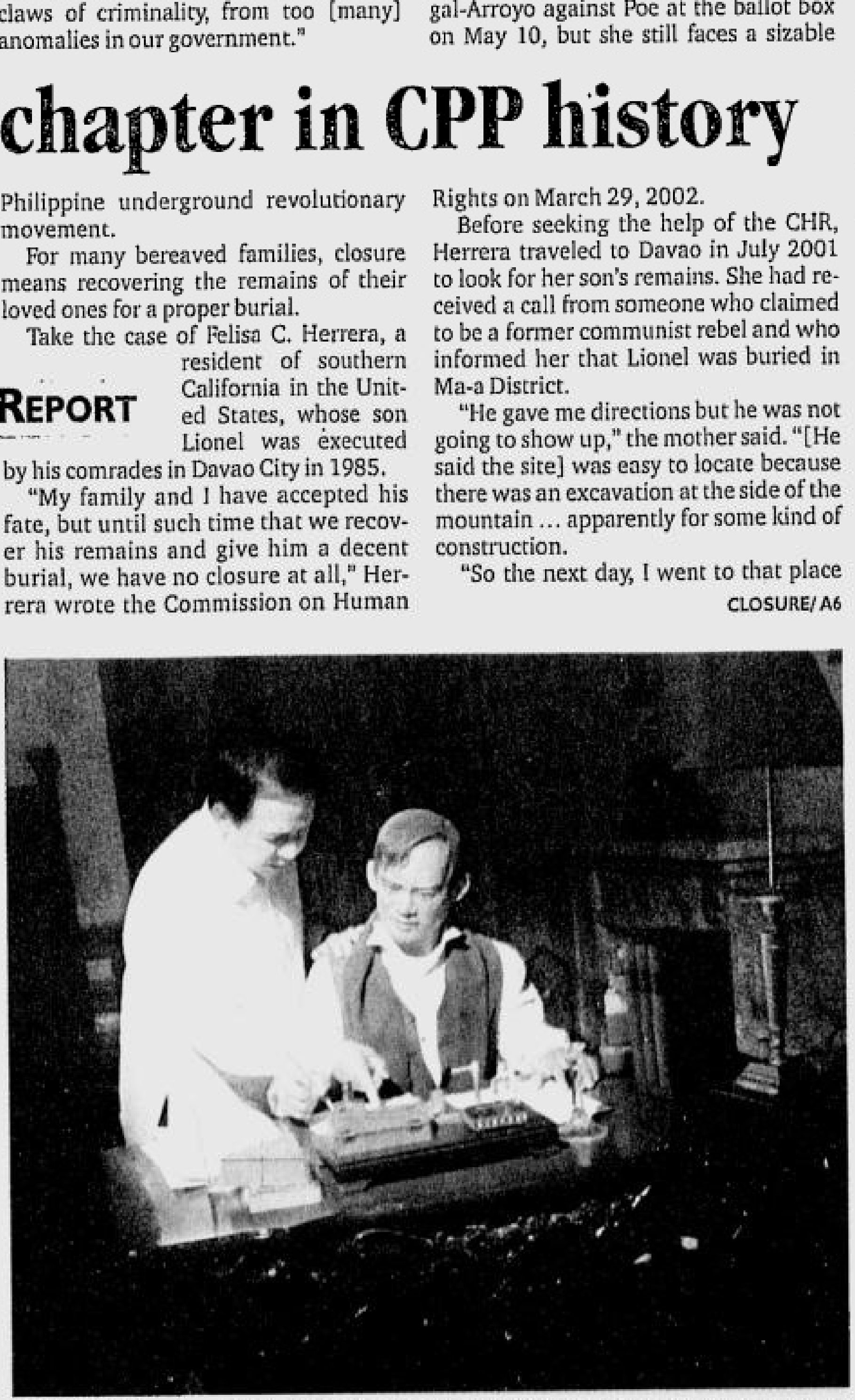
"Intramuros was the Walled City built by the Spaniards to keep ordinary Filipinos out, not only physically. The walls were used to harass and intimidate us, leaving us feeling eternally victimized and mired in our own petty bickerings. It was Rizal who broke through that wall," Gordon said.

Why Bagumbayan? It was in tribute to the "New City" founded by Rajah Sulayman after his old fortress in Manila was overrun by the invading Spaniards. That same stretch of land [which would later become Luneta] was eventually "fertilized by the blood of martyrs," like Rizal, Gordon explained.

The moving dolls in life-like costumes, the sets and other effects take visitors through a 45-minute tour of Philippine history: from prehistoric times, the arrival of the Spaniards and Christianity, the shaping of Filipino culture under the *prayles* and the brewing revolutionary movement, up to Rizal's execution in 1896.

But it was the voice-over script that made the museum a biting commentary on the social ills Rizal exposed during his time, and which Gordon said still plagued

P130-M MUSEUM/ A4



TOURISM Secretary Richard Gordon inspects national hero Jose Rizal's diorama at the Bagumbayan Light and Sound Museum in Intramuros, Manila. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Second FrontPage

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COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/30/03

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2 more Abu Sayyaf leaders fall

By Christian V. Esguerra

MILITARY alert against the Abu Sayyaf has been raised following separate arrests on Saturday of two suspected key members of the kidnap for ransom group.

Mohammad Said, also known as Kaiser Said, is said to be the right-hand man of Isnilon Hapilon or Abu Musab, the second highest ranking Abu leader. Alih Malabon, alias Abu Nidal, allegedly worked closely with the bandit group's chief, Khadafi Janjalani.

Both were nabbed in Zamboanga City. Each carried a P1 million bounty, but it wasn't immediately clear if anyone would collect the rewards.

Despite the arrests, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya said the remaining gang members still posed an "asymmetrical" threat.

He pointed out that Janjalani was still at large and probably hiding in the Lanao area or in Central Mindanao. "It doesn't take many (bandits) to stage an attack," Abaya told reporters. "A small group can inflict disproportionate damage."

If it was any consolation, Abaya said, Said's arrest could "cripple" the group. He described the suspect as a "significant catch" and, as Hapilon's right-hand man, a "sub-leader."

But he said the Southern Command deferred Said's presentation to the media until military officials were sure that they got the right man.

Both suspects are being interrogated at the Southcom headquarters in Zamboanga City.

Members of the 1st Scout Ranger Battalion, 9th Intelligence Security Group, and Task Force Zamboanga arrested Said in Barangay Recodo at around 10:30 a.m. No details of Malabon's capture were immediately available.

Said was allegedly involved in the kidnapping of at least 21 people in Sipadan, Malaysia in April 2000, and 20 more from the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan in May 2001.

The Philippine government earlier offered a P5 million reward each for the capture of Janjalani, Hapilon and other gang leaders involved in the Dos Palmas incident. The two are also wanted by the United States for the kidnapping and killing of two American hostages.

Washington likewise offered a reward of up to $5 million for information leading to their arrest or conviction, and those of the three other top Abu commanders—Jainal Antal Sali or Abu Solayman, Hamsiraji Marusi Sali or Jose Ramirez, and Aldan Tilao or Abu Sabaya.

Sabaya was killed in a rescue operation on June 21, 2002. The two others are also at large.

Last year, more than 1,000 American troops trained Filipinos in a counter-terrorism campaign that helped dislodge the Abu Sayyaf from its stronghold on Basilan island. *With a report from AP*

Don't laugh: We're now jueteng-free

By Norman Bordadora

JUETENG-free, completely and finally.

Or so Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane declared the whole country yesterday.

"Some of you may laugh but this is the truth," Ebdane said in a news briefing where he presented the PNP's yearend report for 2003. The report showed that the centuries-old illegal numbers game that cost Joseph Estrada the presidency only three years ago has been totally eradicated.

As of yesterday, Ebdane boasted, 86 of the 94 provincial and city districts nationwide have been certified free of jueteng and even masiao, another numbers game, by their respective regional offices and local government units.

This translates to a whopping 91.5 percent compliance to the Dec. 15 directive ordering all district directors to put a stop to all forms of illegal gambling in their areas.

Actually, Ebdane said, the remaining eight districts were also jueteng-free, but they still had to obtain the required certification from regional police offices and local government units. These included Camiguin, Negros Oriental, Batanes, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur.

The PNP also reported that the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force, formed in June, has raided and dismantled 16 shabu laboratories, and seized more than P13 billion worth of shabu and ephedrine.

Likewise, the PNP claimed credit for allegedly crushing terrorist cells in the country with the expulsion of 11 Iraqi nationals, including three diplomats; the arrest of Jemaah Islamiyah member Taufeke Refke in Cotabato last October; and the arrest of terrorist Mukhlis Yunos in connection with the Rizal Day bombing in 2000.

Street crimes decreased by 23.8 percent nationwide and by 40.7 percent in Metro Manila, the report noted. While admitting that bank robberies increased by 29 percent this year, the PNP said solution efficiency almost doubled, from 9.7 percent in 2002 to 18.8 percent in 2003.

Other PNP achievements as listed in the report: 65 out of 87 kidnap-for-ransom cases were solved; only 6.4 cars were stolen daily in 2003, compared with 8.3 in 2002; 79,247 wanted persons were arrested, a 70 percent increase from last year's total of 46,585.

DISASTER TEAM

President Macapagal-Arroyo presides over a meeting of the National Disaster Coordinating Council in Malacanang on Monday. The President lauded the government's disaster management effort for achieving zero casualty at the height of typhoon Zigzag a few days ago. Last week's Leyte and Northern Mindanao landslides killed a total of 200 people, according to the NDCC . In photo are (from left) Education Secretary Edilderto de Jesus, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, chair of the NDCC, Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun and Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo. PCPO/MALACANANG PHOTO

Opposition to put up own computer vote counters

By Jerry Esplanada

THE OPPOSITION will put up a "parallel computer system" to counter possible cheating by the administration in the May 2004 elections, former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile has disclosed.

Enrile said the move was necessary as he also expressed doubt on the capability of the nationwide automated vote-counting machines of the Commission on Elections.

Instead of ballot-switching, "it's possible there'll be switching of diskettes this time," Enrile told listeners of Dito sa Bayan ni Juan, his weekly commentary over dzEC radio.

With the Comelec's automated counting machines or ACMs, a "repeat of the cheating by the administration during the 1987 senatorial election is possible," said the opposition leader.

"RFM, the firm belonging to (businessman) Joe Concepcion was in charge of the computers then. He said there would be no irregularities. (But) we caught them cheating. I still have the diskette with me, the one they used in cheating in favor of candidates of the (Aquino) administration," said Enrile.

That is why, Enrile said, Comelec should take a second look at the poll automation law instead of forcing it down the throats of Filipino voters.

"There could be failure of elections, following a serious breakdown in computerized counting and the satellite transmission of election results, caused by brownouts," Enrile warned.

At the same time, Enrile said the opposition would also take a close look at the "printing of ballots, manner of voting and other poll-related systems to be implemented by Comelec."

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos last week dismissed reservations about the poll body's automation system.

Abalos noted the law on automation "has been here for seven years." He also said the new technology's feasibility for the 2004 elections has been approved by the Department of Science and Technology.

Like Enrile, several lawmakers, including those belonging to the Congressional Oversight Committee on Electoral Reforms, had expressed doubt on the ACMs' capability to prevent election fraud.

Last Dec. 15, a joint Senate-House resolution seeking the selective implementation of poll automation in the May polls was even submitted to Malacañang.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has until Jan. 15 to act on the congressional measure.

If approved by the Palace, the proposed law will confine automated voting and counting to Metro Manila; the cities of Baguio, Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue, Talisay, Iloilo, Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro; provinces of Albay, Bataan and Cebu; and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The President said earlier she was against selective automation as she also affirmed the assurance given by the Comelec that it was capable of conducting a nationwide computerization of next May's election process.

2 Americans held for links with al-Qaida

AUTHORITIES have arrested and interrogated two American brothers, one of whom is on a US watchlist for active links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, intelligence and immigration officials said yesterday.

Michael Ray Stubbs and his brother James, a Muslim convert, were expected to be paraded before the media today, 10 days after their arrest in Tanza, Cavite.

Immigration officials said the brothers faced charges of violating the country's immigration act and would be subject to deportation proceedings.

They said the brothers were questioned to find out the extent of their involvement with al-Qaida, which Washington blames for the attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001.

Both Americans are of Middle Eastern descent and married to Filipinos, one intelligence official told Reuters, adding that James Stubbs also uses a Muslim name, Jamil Daud Mujahid. He is on the US watchlist.

Intelligence sources said Michael Ray Stubbs works in a state-run, high-security nuclear and biological research facility in the United States.

"These guys had slipped through the tight US watchlist but we were lucky to get them here," a senior naval intelligence official told Reuters. "The Americans were completely taken by surprise when informed about the arrest of these two men."

He said the brothers were looking to buy property and had met regularly in the Philippines for the past several years.

The Philippines, which is battling several homegrown Muslim and communist rebel groups, has also suffered deadly attacks by militants linked to al-Qaida.

A series of bombings in Metro Manila on Dec. 30, 2000 killed 22 people and wounded hundreds. The attacks were blamed on Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian group affiliated with al-Qaida. *Reuters*

JDV fails anew to stop Bro. Eddie

By Martin P. Marfil

ON CHRISTMAS Day, the Macapagal administration tried but failed to convince evangelist Eddie Villanueva from running for the presidency.

This was revealed yesterday by the preacher, who was interviewed at the Commission on Elections where he tried to resolve another problem, this time concerning the accreditation of his political party, Bangon Pilipinas.

"I cannot say that (it was Malacañang). It was Speaker Jose de Venecia who called me up last Christmas just to greet me and at the same time, remind me if it was still possible for me to reconsider their request," Villanueva said in an ambush interview.

"I told him this * After four months of really intense praying, consulting people and, of course, consulting the Lord and the Lord has placed this passionate burning in my heart to really initiate this change... I felt this overwhelming, passionate burden to present to the Filipino people an alternative,"he added.

Other pro-administration personalities, fearing that it would divide the pro-administration votes, had earlier talked to Villanueva in a bid to prevent him from running. But that effort also failed.

Aside from the attempts to dissuade him, Villanueva yesterday faced the problem of accrediting his political party.

According to his lawyers, they filed their petition before the Comelec on Nov. 12 and they expected the commission to come out with a verification order two days after, as was the case in previous instances.

But in Bangon Pilipinas' case, the lawyers said that it has been two months and their application for accreditation has remained largely untouched, giving rise to the fear that Villanueva might have to run without the benefit of a party.

Texting vs NPA poll extortion

THE MILITARY will use mobile text messaging to help curb extortion by communist insurgents of candidates in the May national elections, a spokesman said yesterday.

Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said the campaign would be similar to one used against the Abu Sayyaf Muslim kidnapping gang which was active in the southern Philippines but has since been weakened by the capture of key leaders.

With the help of text messaging or SMS, candidates and the public at large will be able to report cases of extortion by the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Lucero said.

"We've done this before particularly in Abu Sayyaf areas. We've established hotlines where people can text," said Lucero.

Cellphone text messages would allow callers to keep their identity secret while reporting extortion attempts, he said. *AFP*

PAL passengers told: Come early

ALL passengers departing on international flights of Philippine Airlines will have to check in at least three hours before their scheduled departure time, the airline announced yesterday.

The early check in is due to increased airport security measures being implemented at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2, PAL said in a statement.

The additional security measures, especially at the initial X-ray inspection, have resulted in longer queues and processing time PAL said.

Blind lawyer joins Roco senatorial slate

A BLIND lawyer has joined the crop of senatorial candidates.

Nicanor Gatmaytan Jr., 56, said he accepted presidential candidate Raul Roco's invitation for him to join his ticket.

"No other party has thought of giving equal opportunity to our sector," said Gatnaytan in an interview shortly after he took his oath as a member of Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko.

Roco said he was excited about Gatmaytan's running since this means a lot to the disabled sector.

It is the first time in memory that a blind person would run for the Senate.

Former Nueva Ecija governor Edno Joson has also agreed to join Roco's senatorial line-up.

Joson, the National Food Authority chief during the Estrada administration, has been a long-time Roco supporter.

The others in Roco's senatorial slate are reelectionist Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, former solicitor general Frank Chavez, former securities chief Perfecto Yasay Jr., lawyer Mel Mauricio, TV host Jay Sonza and bowling champion Bong Coo. Roco and his senatorial candidates are expected to file their certificates of candidacy today.

Gatmaytan was not born blind but gradually lost his sight.

By the time he finished law at the University of the Philippines in 1973, he was completely blind.

After graduation he worked with renowned lawyer Dakila Castro until 1987, when he put up his own law firm.

He has been a member of the New York Bar since 1985.

He was former president of the Philippine Blind Union and serves as legal adviser of the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons.

Gatmaytan is no stranger to elections, having lost twice.

He ran as an independent for the first congressional district of Quezon City in 1992 and as a party-list nominee in 1998.

Gatmaytan said Roco's group approached him sometime during the second week of December and asked him to run for the Senate.

He said he did not personally know Roco.

"At first I refused. I'm not prepared for this while others had their plans laid out since 2001. And I had to think of my disability, my finances, my law firm. It entails a lot of sacrifice," Gatmaytan said.

He decided to run, he said, to at least bring the plight of the disabled to public awareness and to promote equal opportunity in government for the disabled.

He had no qualms about joining Aksyon "because I'm really for Roco; he's the only competent and qualified candidate."

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Second FrontPage

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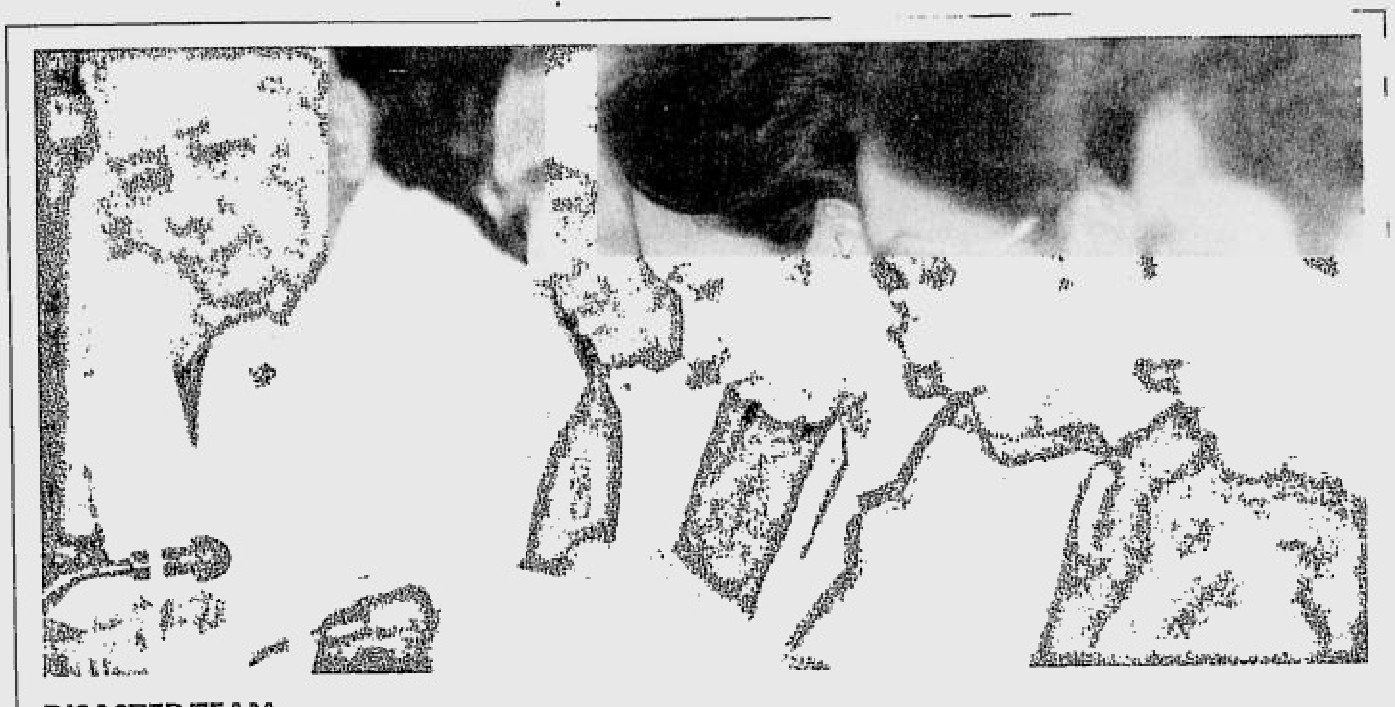
Likewise, the PNP claimed credit for allegedly crushing terrorist cells in the country with the expulsion of 11 Iraqi nationals, including three diplomats; the arrest of Jemaah Islamiyah member Taufeke Refke in Cotabato last October; and the arrest of terrorist Mukhlis Yunos in connection with the Rizal Day bombing in 2000.

Street crimes decreased by 23.8 percent nationwide and by 40.7 percent in Metro Manila, the report noted. While admitting that bank robberies increased by 29 percent this year, the PNP said solution efficiency almost doubled, from 9.7 percent in 2002 to 18.8 percent in 2003.

Other PNP achievements as listed in the report: 65 out of 87 kidnap-for-ransom cases were solved; only 6.4 cars were stolen daily in 2003, compared with 8.3 in 2002; 79,247 wanted persons were arrested, a 70 percent increase from last year's total of 46,585.



DISASTER TEAM

President Macapagal-Arroyo presides over a meeting of the National Disaster Coordinating Council in Malacanang on Monday. The President lauded the government's disaster management effort for achieving zero casualty at the height of typhoon Zigzag a few days ago. Last week's Leyte and Northern Mindanao landslides killed a total of 200 people, according to the NDCC . In photo are (from left) Education Secretary Edilderto de Jesus, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, chair of the NDCC, Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun and Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo. MALACANANG PHOTO

Opposition to put up own computer vote counters

By Jerry Esplanada

THE OPPOSITION will put up a "parallel computer system" to counter possible cheating by the administration in the May 2004 elections, former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile has disclosed.

Enrile said the move was necessary as he also expressed doubt on the capability of the nationwide automated vote-counting machines of the Commission on Elections.

Instead of ballot-switching, "it's possible there'll be switching of diskettes this time," Enrile told listeners of Dito sa Bayan ni Juan, his weekly commentary over dzEC radio.

With the Comelec's automated counting machines or ACMs, a "repeat of the cheating by the administration during the 1987 senatorial election is possible," said the opposition leader.

"RFM, the firm belonging to (businessman) Joe Concepcion was in charge of the computers then. He said there would be no irregularities. (But) we caught them cheating. I still have the diskette with me, the one they used in cheating in favor of candidates of the (Aquino) administration," said Enrile.

That is why, Enrile said, Comelec should take a second look at the poll automation law instead of forcing it down the throats of Filipino voters.

"There could be failure of elections, following a serious breakdown in computerized counting and the satellite transmission of election results, caused by brownouts," Enrile warned.

At the same time, Enrile said the opposition would also take a close look at the "printing of ballots, manner of voting and other poll-related systems to be implemented by Comelec."

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos last week dismissed reservations about the poll body's automation system.

Abalos noted the law on automation "has been here for seven years." He also said the new technology's feasibility for the 2004 elections has been approved by the Department of Science and Technology.

Like Enrile, several lawmakers, including those belonging to the Congressional Oversight Committee on Electoral Reforms, had expressed doubt on the ACMs' capability to prevent election fraud.

Last Dec. 15, a joint Senate-House resolution seeking the selective implementation of poll automation in the May polls was even submitted to Malacañang.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has until Jan. 15 to act on the congressional measure.

If approved by the Palace, the proposed law will confine automated voting and counting to Metro Manila; the cities of Baguio, Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue, Talisay, Iloilo, Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro; provinces of Albay, Bataan and Cebu and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The President said earlier she was against selective automation as she also affirmed the assurance given by the Comelec that it was capable of conducting a nationwide computerization of next May's election process.

2 Americans held for links with al-Qaida

AUTHORITIES have arrested and interrogated two American brothers, one of whom is on a US watchlist for active links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, intelligence and immigration officials said yesterday.

Michael Ray Stubbs and his brother James, a Muslim convert, were expected to be paraded before the media today, 10 days after their arrest in Tanza, Cavite.

Immigration officials said the brothers faced charges of violating the country's immigration act and would be subject to deportation proceedings.

They said the brothers were questioned to find out the extent of their involvement with al-Qaida, which Washington blames for the attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001.

Both Americans are of Middle Eastern descent and married to Filipinos, one intelligence official told Reuters, adding that James Stubbs also uses a Muslim name, Jamil Daud Mujahid. He is on the US watchlist.

Intelligence sources said Michael Ray Stubbs works in a state-run, high-security nuclear and biological research facility in the United States.

"These guys had slipped through the tight US watchlist but we were lucky to get them here," a senior naval intelligence official told Reuters. "The Americans were completely taken by surprise when informed about the arrest of these two men."

He said the brothers were looking to buy property and had met regularly in the Philippines for the past several years.

The Philippines, which is battling several homegrown Muslim and communist rebel groups, has also suffered deadly attacks by militants linked to al-Qaida.

A series of bombings in Metro Manila on Dec. 30, 2000 killed 22 people and wounded hundreds. The attacks were blamed on Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian group affiliated with al-Qaida. *Reuters*

JDV fails anew to stop Bro. Eddie

By Martin P. Marfil

ON CHRISTMAS Day, the Macapagal administration tried but failed to con-ince evangelist Eddie Villanueva rom running for the presidency.

This was revealed yesterday by the preacher, who was interviewed at the Commission on Elections where he tried to resolve another problem, this time concerning the accreditation of his political party, Bangon Pilipinas.

"I cannot say that (it was Malacañang). It was Speaker Jose de Venecia who called me up last Christmas ust to greet me and at the same time, emind me if it was still possible for me to reconsider their request," Villanueva said in an ambush interview.

"I told him this * After four months of really intense praying, consulting people and, of course, consulting the Lord and the Lord has placed this passionate burning in my heart to really initiate this change... I felt this overwhelming, passionate burden to present to the Filipino people an alternative,"he added.

Other pro-administration personalities, fearing that it would divide the pro-administration votes, had earlier talked to Villanueva in a bid to prevent him from running. But that effort also failed.

Aside from the attempts to dissuade him, Villanueva yesterday faced the problem of accrediting his political party.

According to his lawyers, they filed their petition before the Comelec on Nov. 12 and they expected the commission to come out with a verification order two days after, as was the case in previous instances.

But in Bangon Pilipinas' case, the lawyers said that it has been two months and their application for accreditation has remained largely untouched, giving rise to the fear that Villanueva might have to run without the benefit of a party.

Texting vs NPA poll extortion

THE MILITARY will use mobile text messaging to help curb extortion by communist insurgents of candidates in the May national elections, a spokesman said yesterday.

Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said the campaign would be similar to one used against the Abu Sayyaf Muslim kidnapping gang which was active in the southern Philippines but has since been weakened by the capture of key leaders.

With the help of text messaging or SMS, candidates and the public at large will be able to report cases of extortion by the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Lucero said.

"We've done this before particularly in Abu Sayyaf areas. We've established hotlines where people can text," said Lucero.

Cellphone text messages would allow callers to keep their identity secret while reporting extortion attempts, he said. *AFP*

PAL passengers told: Come early

ALL passengers departing on international flights of Philippine Airlines will have to check in at least three hours before their scheduled departure time, the airline announced yesterday.

The early check in is due to increased airport security measures being implemented at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2, PAL said in a statement.

The additional security measures, especially at the initial X-ray inspection, have resulted in longer queues and processing time PAL said.

Blind lawyer joins Roco senatorial slate

A BLIND lawyer has joined the crop of senatorial candidates.

Nicanor Gatmaytan Jr., 56, said he accepted presidential candidate Raul Roco's invitation for him to join his ticket.

"No other party has thought of giving equal opportunity to our sector," said Gatmaytan in an interview shortly after he took his oath as a member of Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko.

Roco said he was excited about Gatmaytan's running since this means a lot to the disabled sector.

It is the first time in memory that a blind person would run for the Senate.

Former Nueva Ecija governor Edno Joson has also agreed to join Roco's senatorial line-up.

Joson, the National Food Authority chief during the Estrada administration, has been a long-time Roco supporter.

The others in Roco's senatorial slate are reelectionist Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, former solicitor general Frank Chavez, former securities chief Perfecto Yasay Jr., lawyer Mel Mauricio, TV host Jay Sonza and bowling champion Bong Coo. Roco and his senatorial candidates are expected to file their certificates of candidacy today.

Gatmaytan was not born blind but gradually lost his sight.

By the time he finished law at the University of the Philippines in 1973, he was completely blind.

After graduation he worked with renowned lawyer Dakila Castro until 1987, when he put up his own law firm.

He has been a member of the New York Bar since 1985.

He was former president of the Philippine Blind Union and serves as legal adviser of the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons.

Gatmaytan is no stranger to elections, having lost twice.

He ran as an independent for the first congressional district of Quezon City in 1992 and as a party-list nominee in 1998.

Gatmaytan said Roco's group approached him sometime during the second week of December and asked him to run for the Senate.

He said he did not personally know Roco.

"At first I refused. I'm not prepared for this while others had their plans laid out since 2001. And I had to think of my disability, my finances, my law firm. It entails a lot of sacrifice," Gatmaytan said.

He decided to run, he said, to at least bring the plight of the disabled to public awareness and to promote equal opportunity in government for the disabled.

He had no qualms about joining Aksyon "because I'm really for Roco. he's the only competent and qualified candidate."

Noli agrees to be GMA running mate

From page A1

ceptance of Ms Macapagal's offer.

"I had no doubt that Gloria had always wanted Noli to be her running mate," Drilon said in a phone interview.

Drilon, who is in Shanghai with his family, said that Ms Macapagal's assessment that her running mate could transfer his votes to her "remains to be seen."

Drilon, chair of the Liberal Party, said that when Ms Macapagal was the running mate of Speaker Jose de Venecia in the 1998 election, she won, but the Speaker lost.

Drilon said the same thing happened in the 1992 election. Businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco had as his running mate, then Sen. Joseph Estrada. Cojuangco lost, but Estrada won.

But the close links of De Castro to the Lopez family, which controls the ABS-CBN broadcast network he worked for as well as the country's largest power distributor, have invited criticism that he is beholden to vested interests.

Whoever wins as vice president, "ABS-CBN is the winner," Drilon said.

Sen. Loren Legarda, another popular ABS-CBN broadcast personality, is also seeking the vice presidency as the running mate of actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Drilon said he did not see Legarda backing out from the vice presidential race even after De Castro had formally announced his candidacy.

Barbers withdraws

Following De Castro's announcement, Sen. Robert Barbers said he was withdrawing from the vice presidential race "for the sake of party unity" and to ensure the victory of Ms Macapagal.

"Today is a very important day for me. I have finally decided to withdraw my bid for the vice presidency of the Lakas-CMD party so that we can give the President a free hand to choose her best running mate for the 2004 elections," Barbers said at a press conference in the Senate.

"There is higher mission for me: to preserve the unity of the party and to ensure its victory. There is a need to (heed) a higher calling to step down from this contention and abandon my objective for a greater mission to God and my country."

Barbers said he would instead seek another six-year term in the Senate.

Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, expressed surprise about De Castro's declaration that he was running as Ms Macapagal's running mate.

"I did not expect this," Fernando said in a phone interview. "I was confident that my party Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats would pick me."

The MMDA chair had earlier declared that he would file his certificate of candidacy for the vice presidential post on Jan. 5.

In a TV interview yesterday, Lakas-CMD president Speaker Jose de Venecia said the party would ask Fernando to run for senator.

Fernando said he was keeping his options open. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Margaux Ortiz, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Reuters*

BARBERS withdraws VP bid.

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GSX	790,000	118,500	57,303	39,515	31,441	22,589	18,468	15,690
GLX	750,000	112,500	54,220	37,389	29,752	21,376	17,475	14,846
GL	678,000	101,700	48,670	33,562	26,710	19,190	15,689	13,326
DLX	643,000	96,450	45,972	31,702	25,232	18,128	14,280	12,690

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Daring raid on PMA armory recalled

By Ricardo S. Malay
Contributor

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author continues to relive his anecdotal experiences as an offspring of the Marxist revolution that sought to dramatically change Philippine society. He was a staff member of a pre-martial law newspaper.

THIRTY-THREE years ago today, a watershed event in the history of the New People's Army took place. A young officer at the Philippine Military Academy timed his defection to the New People's Army by leading a raid on the academy's armory, delivering large quantities of weapons and ammunition to the rebel forces fighting the Marcos regime.

Little did I know that my life as a clandestine member of the movement seeking to overthrow the dictator-in-the-making would intersect with that momentous episode.

On New Year's Eve, 1970, I had finished writing my stories at the Manila Chronicle when I decided to drop by the National Press Club where a merrymaking was in high gear as the clock ticked on toward 12 midnight. But first, I wanted to greet Manuel Almario, editor of the Philippine News Service, whose office was on the second floor of the NPC building.

An excited Maning quickly led me to the teletype machine, which was furiously clacking out a story datelined Baguio City reporting an insurgent raid on the military academy. Lt. Victor Corpus, a PMA instructor, had taken advantage of his being duty officer of the day by carting away large quantities of the armory's contents with the help of nine NPA fighters.

The raiders, sporting crew cuts, entered the camp aboard three cars led by the lieutenant's army jeep. The timing couldn't have been more auspicious as then President Ferdinand Marcos was vacationing in Baguio City at the time.

Joma

After a couple of beers at the NPC lounge, I went home to our apartment on 9th Avenue, Cubao, Quezon City. My wife Charito told me in hushed tones that we had some visitors. They turned out to be Jose Ma. Sison [Communist Party of the Philippines founding chair] and his wife Juliet, who stood as one of our wedding sponsors.

The couple had requested to stay for two days to attend to some "important matters." Joma, who had gone underground two years earlier to lead the guerrilla struggle, confirmed to me that the NPA raid, which he acknowledged to be "my baby," went on without a hitch.

The convoy of raiders—carrying a total of 21 M-16s, 14 Carbines, six machine guns, one bazooka, a few grenade launchers and 5,000 rounds of ammunition—tooled down highways and byways before reaching an NPA base camp at the foothills of the Sierra Madre.

The following morning, I found Joma typing on his portable Olivetti the defection statement of Corpus. He asked me which was a better sentence, the one that began, "As an officer of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, it is below my dignity … " or "… it is beneath my dignity … ." The former University of the Philippines' English instructor agreed with me on the latter.

After dotting the i's and crossing the t's, Joma relaxed and told me that the raid carried more political, than military, significance because the NPA marauders could have taken away a much larger inventory. But he said the purloined arms would spike the fighting capability of the fledgling people's army as it expanded its forces. Before noon, a courier arrived to take Corpus' statement to the newspapers.

Kumander Pusa

In the evening, I drove Joma to a Caloocan warehouse whose owner was a secret ally of the movement. There, he met Benjamin Sanguyo (Kumander Pusa), one of Corpus' team members, who briefed him on the aspects of the operation. They talked for about an hour while I stood waiting from a distance.

The next day, the Sisons were fetched by car and taken to an underground destination. The defector's statement made it to the front pages along with Joma's companion press release announcing the birth of a "secret Victor Corpus Movement within the reactionary armed forces in order to disintegrate the principal component of reactionary state power."

I continued pounding my Padre Faura beat, but after three months, I received instructions from Joma for another project. He had learned that my classmate in UP High, Rosauro Sibal, was an Air Force helicopter pilot, whose younger brother was a student activist.

To digress, Class 1960 of UP High produced a mixed bag. There were psychiatrist Ronnie Lesaca, chair of Bayan Muna; surgeon Frank Arcellana, head of the Physicians Against Nukes Movement; Helma Ver-Tuason, the favorite daughter of Gen. Fabian Ver; Elinor Virata, younger sister of former Prime Minister Cesar E.A. Virata; Lourdes (Inday Badiday) Jimenez; Army vice chief Gen. Victor Mayo; and Philippine National Police Director Enrique Bulan, who, as a young Constabulary officer, was assigned to keep tabs on me.

Sison suggested that I touch base with Sibal, a classmate of Corpus' in PMA Class 1967, with the object of recruiting him into the movement. With another activist, I was to set up a Marxist study cell that included the Air Force pilot. When Ros had reached the stage of being politically developed, "we would ask him to drop bombs on Malacañang" to escalate the armed struggle, Joma said.

I paid a weekend visit on Sibal at his Quezon City home to size him up. He was assigned to Task Force Saranay, the counter-insurgency arm of the AFP based in Northeastern Luzon. Ros, who held the rank of first lieutenant, said his duty was to transport the troops to contested territories in the region. When he mentioned that he would order returning soldiers who were carrying chickens seized from villagers not to board his helicopter, I thought he had the makings of a good recruit.

Corpus' gift

Weeks after my encounter with Ros, Joma reappeared in my apartment one night. He was brought there by Fidel Agcaoili, one of his close aides, who was a teacher at the Don Bosco High School by day, and performed underground missions at night. The father of Fidel (Ka Peter/Ka Ompong, because of his resemblance to Dolphy) was president of Chrysler Philippines and member of Marcos' UP Law Class of 1939.

Joma told me to scrub the project to recruit Sibal because a more important mission awaited me—to go to China to negotiate the delivery of war materièl for the NPA's expansion and consolidation efforts. He showed off a brand new .357 Magnum, with a velcro ammunition belt—a gift, he said, from Corpus.

On his instruction, I burned the gun license which was issued in the name of Corpus' uncle. He then turned over to me his .38 Astra revolver he acquired a year earlier after experiencing a holdup attempt on board a jeepney. I reluctantly accepted it, seeing no need to arm myself.

Joma proceeded to demonstrate the proper use of the powerful gun to me; I found it amusing that the Maoist theoretician from the Diliman academe was repackaging himself as a martial combatant.

CORPUS: 33 years after the raid.

China mission

In May 1971, Fidel began briefing me on my China mission. He said I was an ideal candidate for the job because of my experience as a diplomatic affairs reporter and my wife, with her English skills, would make a worthy secretary of the mission.

Initially, I resisted the idea, reluctant to leave my calling as a newspaper stiff. But Ka Peter said the word from Joma was final: no appeals. He consoled me with the prospect of being able to return after five years with the assured success of the arms transfer. With a hiccup here and a grumble there, I consented to go.

During the same month, we became parents of a second baby girl. I began having second thoughts about relocating to China because of the new addition to our family. Ka Peter was ticked off that I would welsh on my commitment, as he stressed that the armed struggle's need for a quantum leap couldn't be postponed any longer. His argument was so passionate and so compelling that I felt I had no choice but to heed the revolution's clarion call.

On a windless July morning, with 2-month-old Lisa and 2-year-old Tina in our arms, Charito and I boarded a Thai International jetliner to Hong Kong, wearing shades to avoid recognition. I spotted Dave Baquirin of the Manila Times and Cris Martinez of the Evening News who were taking the same flight, but we managed to keep a respectable distance from my two colleagues and boarded the plane uneventfully.

After an hour-and-a-half flight, we reached the Crown Colony and checked in at the Golden Gate Hotel, owned by a businessman with Beijing connections. I contacted Thomas Pang, the Xinhua correspondent in Hong Kong who was born in Manila and served as China's liaison man to Filipino visitors to the mainland. He tendered a lauriat for us before we slipped into China via Macao on board a Mercedes van.

After driving past the rarely traveled Macao-Kwangtung border, we stopped in front of a building where smiling Chinese officials with Mao badges stood in welcome. At a sumptuous lunch, they toasted us as the new emissaries of a flowering revolution in the gateway to the Far East.

It was the beginning of my China odyssey, my ritual passage as envoy of a misbegotten revolutionary mission.

(Agcaoili, now a resident of Spain, joins the NDF panel in its on-and-off peace negotiations with the GRP side. Kumander Pusa was killed in the early seventies. Sibal, a retired colonel, is a tenured professor at the Ateneo Graduate School of Business.)

₱130-M museum goes beyond Rizal's heroism

From page A1

the Filipino way of life to this day.

In a series of scenes depicting how the friars ministered to the faithful, religion was said to have been reduced into a "transactional" relationship between God and worshipper, with the *prayle* acting as the "*padrino*" or go-between whose favors should also be courted.

"That's why up to today, we seek out *padrinos* and have politicians as wedding sponsors. When we need to apply for a building permit, we don't ask first about the procedures; we ask if we 'know somebody' at City Hall," he added.

When the Spanish succeeded in repulsing Dutch invaders in Manila Bay, the friars taught the people to attribute the victory to a "miraculous" intercession of the Blessed Virgin, rather than the bravery of the enlisted Filipino natives, one tableau noted.

Gordon would explain later: "This was how they killed our sense of enterprise and initiative. We were told to pray to St. Anthony and hope our lost wallet would eventually show up, or plead to St. Jude during 'hopeless' situations."

"We became a nation of prayer and song," the script read. The *kundiman*—which Gordon said was from the phrase "*kung hindi man*" or "if it is not to be"—evolved as a popular song genre from the Spanish period as a "consolation for our miseries."

"We are not questioning [Christian] beliefs but only what was bastardized in our faith," he said when asked whether the script has drawn criticism from conservative religious groups.

300 revolts

A major portion of the tour was devoted to explaining why it took up to "300 sporadic revolts" against Spain—short-lived uprisings led by local patriots like Dagohoy, Gabriela Silang, Hermano Pule and Tamblot—before a revolutionary movement of national scope began to emerge under the leadership of Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo.

This was because the majority of the Filipinos then preferred "to watch on sidelines and wait for who would emerge the likely winner," Gordon said. "Even in our politics today, we will join [the side] we perceive as popular and 'winnable.'"

The scene for the 300 revolts is arranged in such a way that visitors will be taking the second floor of the museum in order to complete the episode. Gordon said this conveyed the uphill "struggle" of the revolution at the time when most Filipinos preferred to "wait and see" from the safety of their balconies as battles unfolded below.

"Even if they were silently rooting for their countrymen, they were reluctant to take risks. They lost their convictions," he said. "Whereas Rizal put his real name on his novels even though he need not to. He returned home although he knew would be incarcerated and executed.

Former nunnery

The tour ends in a rather dolorous scene: a Pieta-like rendition of Rizal's burial, with her mother Teodora Alonzo kneeling next to his corpse draped in white cloth.

The two-story museum used to be the Beateria de San Ignacio of the original Intramuros, the first nunnery established in the Philippines.

When the Department of Tourism started reviving Intramuros as a tourist spot in 2002, the structure was just another dark "*bodega*," Gordon recalled. Governor Rafael Buenaventura of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which owns the building, quickly approved the project, he said.

It took a year of construction work, using only locally made materials, to turn the decrepit warehouse into the crowd-drawer that it is today. The final script relied on several writers, including newspaperman and Makati Rep. Teddy Boy Locsin, while the visual elements included inputs from film director Chito Roño.

For historical accuracy, the DOT consulted with the Ateneo de Manila history department and former Education Minister Onofre D. Corpuz.

No fees are charged visitors to the museum, which opened on Nov. 30. Visitors are admitted in groups for a guided, 45-minute walk-through.

At the end of each tour, they get to listen to a video "epilogue" delivered by Gordon himself, in which he calls for the "transformation" and the building of more "Bagumbayans around our hearts."

"Bagumbayan is not just a place," he stressed, "but an attitude" that must be displayed by an "enabled, ennobled, and free" Filipino.

"The walls of victimization no longer exists … It's time to become horizon-chasers again (like the explorative, seafaring Filipinos were during pre-Spanish period)," he said.

The video montage includes clips from Gordon's accomplishments as chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority. "Subic Bay was my Bagumbayan," he later explained.

The museum's exit door leads visitors out to an elevated landing where they are greeted by a sprawling view of the "new Intramuros" as revitalized by the DOT.

The tour was designed to end this way, Gordon said to symbolize how Rizal's vision of nationhood could lead Filipinos "out of the walls" and towards progress.

Erap insists he remains President

From page A1

point, no court other than the special division of the Sandiganbayan can grant me such relief and remedies as are authorized by the applicable provisions of the Constitution, the Rules of Court and those principles of justice and equity that are deemed to be part of the laws of the land," he said in a two-page personal undertaking he submitted to the anti-graft court at 4:30 p.m. yesterday.

"Under the circumstances, and with the worsening pain I am suffering, I have no choice but to submit to the authority of the special division of the Sandiganbayan over my person and over the cases filed against me," he added.

He promised to "return to the Philippines within the authorized period of travel fixed by the Special Division."

Asked whether the undertaking meant that Estrada was dropping his claim to a post he lost more than two years ago, Noel Malaya, one of Estrada's court-appointed lawyers, said: "Not so."

Extension

Defense lawyers also filed a motion asking the Sandiganbayan to extend the 10-day period within which to prepare for his trip, to Feb. 24 in view of Estrada's inability to get an earlier date for his knee replacement operation at the Stanford Medical Center in California. Deadline was originally set for Jan. 3.

In a telephone interview, Malaya said defense lawyers received a letter from Estrada's personal doctor, Christopher Mow, telling them that Estrada's "bilateral total knee replacement" operation had been set for Feb. 4-6.

In his Dec. 26 letter, Mow advised Estrada to be in the hospital for 12 to 24 days in advance for "pre-surgery preparations."

"Mr. Estrada does not want to go there anytime earlier because he could not imagine how he would spend his idle time while awaiting his operation," Malaya said.

He said the court would have to move Estrada's three-month leave to a date beyond the March 31 deadline.

The move has raised questions from government prosecutors that Estrada could be hatching a plan to stay in the United States until the May presidential election.

"It looks like there is a hidden agenda whereby Estrada is being allowed to leave and wait out for the result of the elections," Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio told Sandiganbayan reporters.

No valid reason

Villa-Ignacio pointed to talks that Estrada was planning to keep his promise of returning here only if an opposition candidate won the election.

In their motion for reconsideration, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and Villa-Ignacio said Estrada failed to show "valid reason to refuse undergoing knee surgery" here, considering that there were 30 to 50 Filipino specialists in 15 hospitals who can do the job well.

They also disagreed with the Sandiganbayan when it ruled that there is no "express prohibition of law" stopping an accused facing serious charges from leaving abroad for a medical reason.

There is jurisprudence, according to them, curtailing the right of the accused to travel to keep him "within the reach of the courts."

"The core of preventive detention or denial of bail is the forfeiture of the accused's rights of abode and travel," Marcelo and Villa-Ignacio said.

With the court's resolution, they said the Sandiganbayan had "effectively opened the door to the possible flight of (Estrada) from this jurisdiction."

Estrada's son Jinggoy said in Iloilo City that his father was not considering plans to escape prosecution once he gets to the United States.

"The prosecutors need not worry. He will come back. After the surgery, he will rest for a few weeks or a few days then he will fly back to Manila," Jinggoy said upon arrival at the Iloilo domestic airport.

With reports from Jerome Aning in Manila and Raj Padilla, PDI Visayas Bureau

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Lakas planning to field more show biz stars

From page A1

broadcaster-turned-senator Noli de Castro as President Macapagal-Arroyo's running mate, two top Lakas-CMD officials disclosed the administration party was planning to field actors Bong Revilla and Lito Lapid as senatorial candidates, as well as Joey Marquez and Mat Ranillo III as congressional candidates.

One of the Lakas officials involved in the selection of senatorial and congressional candidates told the INQUIRER that the administration party had turned to show biz personalities to neutralize the drawing power of popular actor Fernando Poe Jr., who plans to run for president under the opposition banner.

The two Lakas officials said fielding show biz personalities would give the party a good chance of controlling the next Congress.

"This idea of media-genic personalities is emerging in the selection process especially when it became clear that FPJ is running," the official said. "These are pragmatic compromises because it's difficult to change our culture."

Bong Revilla, chair of the Videogram Regulatory Board and former governor of Cavite, is the star of the Metro Manila Film Festival top-grosser "Captain Barbell."

Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid was planning to run for mayor of the City of San Fernando, but he decided to join the administration's senatorial slate at the behest of Ms Macapagal.

"He (Lapid) said (he) was offered (a slot) by the President and he accepted," one of the Lakas officials said.

Despite the controversy surrounding his affair with actress Kris Aquino, Parañaque Mayor Joey Marquez had been chosen the Lakas candidate for the new congressional district of Parañaque, according to the two officials.

"He was never out of Lakas," the party official said.

Ranillo has been designated as the Lakas candidate for the second congressional district of Zamboanga del Norte.

While Revilla and Lapid have been assured of slots in the administration's 12-man senatorial ticket, seasoned politicians will have to wait in line.

Eyeing slots in the Lakas senatorial ticket are Sen. Robert Barbers, former Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Agrarian Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, and former Senators Heherson Alvarez, Ernesto Herrera and Orlando Mercado.

Lacson divides opposition ranks

From page A1

"I have already filed [my COC], I will push through with my candidacy."

He said his filing of his COC was the "first step" toward the change the people were looking for.

"We are really very serious in setting government right because that is the only way we can set this country right," the senator said. "I will fight against corruption. I will fight against excesses and abuses." Lacson has accused Ms Macapagal's husband of corruption.

Asked whether he had closed the door for a possible meeting with Poe, Lacson said his camp "has opened its lines of communication."

He did not dismiss the possibility that in the end the opposition might still unite for the May presidential elections. "For all we know, we might end up with one opposition candidate—who is Senator Lacson," he told reporters.

Lacson said he would announce soon his running mate and his senatorial candidates, who, he said, would file their COCs before Jan. 5, the deadline of the filing period.

Among those being eyed as possible running mate of Lacson are Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority, an opposition senator, and a Cabinet official.

Only House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla has filed his COC for senator with Lacson's camp. Aides of Lacson earlier revealed that aside from Padilla, the possible senatorial candidates were socialite Rosemarie "Baby" Arenas, former Immigration Commissioner Rufus Rodriguez, former Ambassador to Egypt Makabangkit Lanto, and Tagaytay City Mayor Francis Tolentino.

Sole authority

LDP spokesperson Mike Romero said Lacson could not claim that he was the official candidate of the LDP because the Comelec had yet to rule on the petitions filed by the party.

The LDP told the poll body that it had the sole authority to sign all nominations of the party. Romero said this authority was stated in the constitution and by-laws of the party.

Romero noted that all the actions taken by Angara had the support of the majority of LDP members as shown by the full-page advertisements in some newspapers.

Angara earlier told the Comelec that he had the sole authority to nominate the party's candidates, but Lacson's camp was contesting this, saying that it had already suspended Angara.

Abalos said the Comelec wanted to resolve the issue at the soonest possible time. Otherwise, "they would be deprived of their representatives by way of watchers who will be receiving a copy of the election returns," he said.

The Comelec chair said the parties involved in the conflict could appeal the case before the Supreme Court, but he said that it might take time.

In case the Comelec decided in favor of one of the parties, Abalos said that the poll body would consider that party the "official nominee" of the LDP unless the commission was restrained.

Congressmen belonging to the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats said Lacson's filing of the certificate of candidacy would boost the chances of victory of Ms Macapagal.

Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) said Lacson's candidacy "further dimmed the opposition's chances" as this ensured that the opposition would be split between Lacson and Poe.

"The opposition has to contest candidates within and outside its own camp. This is their dilemma," Pichay said.

Steel shirt

Rep. Wilfrido Villarama (Lakas, Bulacan) said that "knowing the propensity of Lacson's group to destroy reputations, Poe should better wear a steel shirt to protect his back."

"Past events have proven that Lacson's formula to become president is to destroy the reputation of enemies," Villarama said.

He also claimed that the Lacson-Poe rift was "one of the signs from heaven that favor the candidacy of President Macapagal."

"While I do not want to sound sacrilegious, the presidency is made in heaven," Villarama said. "There are partial signs that favor the candidacy of President Macapagal and one is the Lacson-FPJ rift."

Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano (Lakas, Pateros-Taguig) said that while the opposition was divided, the administration was consistently building up its coalition.

Cayetano claimed that Ms Macapagal "remains the candidate to beat." *With a report from AP*

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Victim forgives tormentors but still fears the dark

By Nico Alconaba
Chief, PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—Oscar "Oca" Casaysay is afraid of the dark, and it's new to him.

His work as United Front coordinator in the communist movement trained him not to be afraid of the dark. He frequented disco houses and clubs in the company of lawyers, like Silvestre Bello III and the late human rights lawyer Larry Ilagan.

His job was to make sure that the lawyers would show up the next day, with or without a hangover, as speakers at a news conference or as members of the negotiating panel of a mass action.

The night life was part of Oca until Oct. 21, 1985, when he and Henry, then members of the United Front Committee, were summoned to a meeting. They were taken to an abandoned house in Indangan, then considered CS (countryside), which was some 10 km from the city proper.

But there was no meeting, not even the usual handshake between comrades. Instead, their hands and feet were chained.

Henry was brought upstairs. Oca stayed on the ground floor.

Oca suspected nothing. He thought it was just part of a test that he had to pass before he could join a meeting with the "higher-ups."

Then somebody told him: "OK, confess now. When did you start?"

Clueless, Oca narrated how he started as an activist and how he was recruited into the youth group Kabataang Makabayan.

Slaps, punches

Then Pepot, known then as the head of the Southern Mindanao's military unit, slapped him and said: "That's not what we want to know. When were you recruited as a DPA (deep-penetration agent)?"

This made Oca smile, which earned him more slaps.

He was asked if he had any ailment. None, he said, except for hemorrhoids.

"So you don't have a heart ailment?" he was asked.

None. He was punched in the chest.

"No stomach ailment?"

None. Another blow to the stomach.

Still, the physical abuse was nothing to Oca, who continued to believe that the blows were part of the test.

He was asked about his rank.

"I remembered my rank in my CAT (Citizens' Army Training). I said, technical sergeant, then private in ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps)." Again, more slaps.

It was only after some five hours of physical abuse that Oca realized that the accusations were serious. It wasn't the slaps, punches and kicks that convinced him he was a captive; it was that Pepot was wearing shoes, a T-shirt and a wrist watch.

"It's as if someone hit me in the solar plexus." That was when he wept—and felt the pain of every slap, blow and kick.

Baseball bat

Pepot hit Oca's legs lightly with a stick. "It was nothing, but after an hour, I felt like being hit with a baseball bat."

He had to survive, Oca thought. So he "confessed" to being a spy.

He was told to rest, but he didn't sleep all night.

The ordeal resumed in the morning. This time, his interrogator was Ponce, his political officer, who was holding a notebook.

Ponce told Oca to "talk," saying that somebody had already done so and that it was in the notebook. Oca did not know what to say.

He was told to draw the "structure" of the DPAs in the movement. He did.

But he did not name his supposed fellow DPAs. "They supplied the names, so I just said yes."

There was less physical abuse that day, only slapping. "People were coming and going. When they returned, they were hotheaded. *Paak!* Without warning, I got slapped. Again and again."

He also heard Henry crying upstairs.

Birthday song

It was Oca's birthday on the third day. His "custodians" learned of this after reading letters sent to him by friends.

Lunch was served. Nothing fancy—*mongo* (beans) and *ginamos* (fish paste).

His "custodians" sang "Happy birthday to you, *ginamos og mongos…*"

"I considered them devils at the time."

There was no fireworks display, but there was a gunshot. Pilay, one of the "custodians," was cleaning his .45 cal. pistol when he accidentally fired it, narrowly missing Oca.

"You thought you were dead, right?" Pilay told Oca. Everyone laughed.

At around 6 p.m. that day, he was told that they had to move to another area. It was the first time in three days that he saw Henry—but only for a moment because they were quickly blindfolded and put into a vehicle.

They were brought to a house, which Oca later learned was near the Diversion Road, only about 5 km from downtown. There was electricity.

He could hear the sound of passing vehicles nearby. There was hope, he told himself.

They were later transferred to a house with one room where they stayed for at least two weeks before they were moved from one place to another—Matina Pangi (5 km from downtown), Belisario Heights (also 5 km from the city proper) and Bacaca (3 km).

But these movements did not help Henry, who kept on crying. He and Oca stayed together for several months until they had to break into groups for security reasons.

Freedom

The separation led to Henry's freedom. One day, he told one of his "custodians" that he had to see a dentist.

When they arrived at the clinic, Henry told the taxi driver to drive away after his "custodian" had alighted.

Oca ended up in the company of members of the Sparrow Unit, the urban liquidation team of the New People's Army.

He earned "freedom," but only with the Sparrows around. They visited friends and spent weeks at his parents' house.

But it was not clear if the suddenly idle Oca was indeed free. At one point, he and the Sparrows watched the Edsa I uprising on television, laughing as an activist-nun called on the people to attack City Hall.

In June 1986, he had a serious talk with some people in the movement and was told of the charges against him. He had become a suspect because of his being frequently seen in discos and beer houses.

"I said it was natural for me to be there because we were organizing the lawyers."

Oca had a meeting with Ponce, who told him that he had been cleared.

He asked Ponce about what was in the notebook that the latter was holding during the interrogation, and was told that there was nothing in it.

Apology

Ponce admitted that he and the others realized they had nothing against Oca even if he had confessed to being a DPA. Ponce apologized.

Oca asked to talk with Bosyo, another "custodian." The meeting with Bosyo started at 8 p.m. and ended at 6 a.m. the next day.

"I poured out all my ill-feelings."

Bosyo also cleared Henry, who left the movement after his escape.

A year later, Oca met his "worst" custodian, Pepot, who was then suffering from a bullet wound in the arm that had turned gangrenous.

Oca facilitated Pepot's transfer to Manila and confinement in a hospital.

"When he saw me, he cried." Pepot did not expect his torture victim to help him.

They met again years later, and Pepot was a different man—"as if he owed me a lot."

Pepot allegedly joined the vigilante group Davao Death Squad. He was reported missing last year.

Another "custodian," Tatang, was killed in a raid two weeks after he kicked Oca in the face with his thick-soled shoes.

Oca also met Pilay, the one who almost shot him, who is now supposedly having a miserable life.

He wants to see and talk with "custodian" Medel, who has left the movement and gone to Cebu.

Wounded man

Oca may have confronted almost all of his tormentors, but the experience left him a wounded man.

There were times when he would hear people talking even when no one was around, when he felt uneasy as darkness set in, when he became dependent on medication to have a good night sleep.

But he continued working with the movement to prove to his tormentors that "they were wrong about me."

In 1992, at a meeting, he called it quits. He snapped: "I'm fed up with you. I'm fed up with meetings. I give up."

He joined the Reform the Armed Forces Movement that year, as a facilitator of its peace seminars. He spent four years with the RAM, and handled the campaign of then senatorial aspirant Gregorio Honasan.

For Oca, handling Honasan's campaign and helping him win was an achievement to openly tell people. "It's because I cannot boast that I had sent materials to the mountain."

He has realized that his skill lay in organizing special events. "But not events such as weddings and debuts. Something big-time, like festivals."

Oca is still in that line of work. He says that if the movement wants his services, he will not say no. He has forgiven his torturers.

But he still cannot sleep in total darkness, only when there is a beam of light from outside his room.

CPP body to handle closure proposed

By Ismael
Ex-National Council member, National Democratic Front

I EARNESTLY regret my participation in the so-called anti-infiltration campaigns of the Communist Party of the Philippines. That I was not part of the decision-making process and that I was merely an operative in the casing and arrest of some of the suspects do not lighten the burden that I carry.

It is not easy to speak of closure, even as the CPP has condemned the aberration, accepted its responsibility, punished the culpable, made steps to draw lessons from the bitter experience, and hailed the victims as "martyrs of the revolution."

These are all fine, but these must be pursued until all ground is covered. And efforts must be exerted to let the people know about it all, lest some anti-CPP quarters declare that the party had swept the issue under the rug.

I have, on many occasions, openly suggested to some of the party's responsible cadres that a body be formed to pursue its declarations and decisions regarding the anti-infiltration campaigns. True, the initial steps to reach out to the victims and their families have been made.

In some regions, the CPP, in fact, endeavored to honor the victims in unprecedented ways. Due, however, to pressing tasks that daily preoccupy the party, these efforts have not been pursued on a continuing basis.

Without a body to take care of the need for continuity, identifying and honoring the victims, and reaching out to their families, seeking redress of grievances and finally putting a closure to each case will never be accomplished.

And organizations such as the PATH (Peace Advocates for Truth, Justice and Healing), the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency of the United States) and the Dutch intelligence will always find the anti-infiltration campaigns a convenient theme against the party.

I personally seek closure for the victims who had suffered because I assisted in their arrest, and for the rest of the victims who were put in similar or worse conditions.

I seek closure for my own peace of mind. But such a closure will only happen if my suggestion for the party to form a body to address the issue is done.

I am more than willing to be a part of this body and make it my task in the revolution.

The thought of closure reminds me of Ka Godot. He was a leading CPP cadre in Manila-Rizal, and he was pinpointed as the senior officer in the network of "deep-penetration agents" operating in the party organization in the region.

I set him up for the Olympia-ABB (Alex Boncayao Brigade) team.

After an elaborate operation, he was arrested. His interrogators tortured and detained him for months.

When he was finally released, a meeting was arranged for us. I asked for his forgiveness and he easily gave it to me. When we shook hands, I was ready to cry.

I stood as *ninong* to Ka Godot's child, who was born after the anti-infiltration hysteria.

Ka Godot has since returned to the movement, first above ground, and now as a full-time guerrilla in the countryside.

Closure sought on dark chapter in CPP history

From page A1

with my sister and a couple of Pi Sigma members who knew my son. But we could not find anything, for the area was already a wilderness.

"I was so frustrated because the info came from a voice without a face or a name. I [returned] to the US without any positive result."

At a memorial on May 10 for the victims of the purges, Ferdie Llanes, a fraternity brother of Lionel's, said the latter was branded a military spy and arrested when his comrades found that he had a passport.

Llanes was citing the results of the CHR's initial investigation of Lionel's case.

Lionel, then 23, was left in Davao when his parents and younger brother migrated to the United States in April 1985.

"He used to communicate with me through letters and long distance [calls]," Herrera said. "His last call was sometime in August or September."

For a few families, persistence helped to obtain information on their missing kin.

On the tip of a former partisan, three sisters dug for five days last year in northern Metro Manila, using shovels and a pick, in search of their brother's remains.

"We had mixed feelings of excitement and fear because our informant did not know that we would excavate the place," said one of the sisters. "We were also apprehensive of the military."

Not giving up

They were able to dig up some 40 square meters, to no avail. "We were frustrated because we did not find him and Christmas was fast approaching," said a sister.

But they are not giving up. "We resolved to continue the search," she said.

With no one else to turn to, relatives of the victims have sought the help of the CPP-led National Democratic Front.

"We have the right to know and to be heard but these rights were curtailed by the local leaders of the underground in [northwestern Mindanao]," a group of relatives wrote to the then spokesperson of the NDF on Sept. 16, 1986.

Timoteo R. Sorronda included a copy of this petition in his letter to the INQUIRER on May 8, 1989, in which he mentioned the names of the purge victims and their respective parents.

He listed them as Carlos, his son, of Dipolog City; Orfendo A. Maghanoy and Vicente Gonzales Jr., also of Dipolog; Jack Cagbabanua of Dapitan City; Ricky Cuizon of Jimenez, Misamis Occidental; David L. Barrios Jr. and his brother Dean of Polanco, Zamboanga del Norte; and Maui Veloso of Mandaue City.

"These young people were loved dearly by us and we want to see them once before we leave this world," said Sorronda, speaking on behalf of the other families.

To the mountains

Ronnie Ignacio's search for his brother Joselito (or Loloy), a New People's Army guerrilla who had not been heard from by his family for two years, meant going straight to the mountains.

Their mother Elisea, 77, recalled what the NPA had told Ronnie: "When the military left after a fierce firefight with the NPA on Mt. Banahaw, Loloy was picking up the guns of fallen soldiers. But a wounded soldier shot and killed him."

What actually happened was that Loloy died in Operation Missing Link (OPML) in 1988 in Mauban, Quezon, according to a survivor of the purge.

MAY 10 memorial for victims of CPP purge at UP-Diliman's Freedom Park.

PDIPHOTO

"They said Loloy was accorded a proper burial, and his personal belongings like a *banig* (mat), a blanket and a jacket were given to Ronnie," said Elisea as she took a break from filling empty gin bottles with coconut oil, which she sells at her shack in Canlubang, Laguna.

Some of the victims' remains have been found and turned over to their families. But truth eludes the parents of Benjie Liboro, a former commerce student of the University of Sto. Tomas in Manila, who joined the NPA but fell victim to the OPML.

His younger brother Raymund, who had recruited Benjie into the party, and his four other siblings made their parents believe that he died in a gun battle with the military. Raymund has left the party.

Benjie's remains were recovered because a former NPA guerrilla, who had served as a guard in the OPML, led authorities to mass graves in Quezon and Laguna in May 1989.

The military said dozens of skeletal remains were unearthed in Sitio Cagsiay in Barangay Piapi in Mauban, and in Barangay Pulot, Cavinti, Laguna.

The CPP claims that it had made efforts to inform the victims' families. But many never got to know.

A group formed by survivors, friends and families is demanding that the CPP-NPA locate the burial sites and return the remains to their respective kin.

Still unaware

"Many families of those who perished in the purges are still unaware to this day of what happened to their loved ones. They deserve to know now and there is absolutely no reason to delay this," the Peace Advocates for Truth, Justice and Healing (PATH) said.

The PATH's call has not gone unheeded. CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal has offered to help the families locate their loved ones' remains.

"We call on the families to contact us through a group or an individual who is in good standing in the party. We are ready to address their concerns as much as we can, including helping them search for the remains," Rosal said in a statement issued in May.

His offer was a turnaround from his stand the previous week, in which he assailed the "perennial recollection" of the bloody purges.

"So what's the use of constantly resurrecting the issue?" Rosal said then, referring to the May 10 memorial for purge victims at the UP Freedom Park in Diliman, Quezon City. "This is the work of counterrevolutionaries masquerading as advocates of truth and justice for the sake of the purge victims."

Doing more

A cadre who was involved in Olympia, the anti-infiltration campaign in Metro Manila, and who is still active in the underground movement, wants to do more to help the victims and their families.

He is proposing that the CPP form a panel to identify and honor the victims, to reach out to their families, to seek redress of grievances, and to put closure to each case. *(See story on this page.)*

The PATH is also pushing for an impartial investigation of the death, torture and detention of the victims, and for a process of healing.

"We believe that justice will only be served if accountabilities are established," it said. "The deep trauma caused by this carnage left deep scars, which remain unhealed. We believe that the wounds may need to be reopened if they are to heal properly. Therapy requires truth, healing requires unburdening."

Closure

For Robert Francis Garcia, chair of the PATH and survivor of the OPML, writing on what he had gone through proved to be a therapeutic and cathartic exercise.

"Grief, at the moment when [it changes] into ideas, loses some of [its] power to injure our heart," Garcia said, quoting Marcel Proust.

He added: "If that is closure, I don't know. If I have no more traumas, I don't know even more. I'm not sure if the character follies and flaws I exhibit can be attributed to the experience—or it's really just me.

"All I know is that the issue is far from closed—a long, long way to go before closure."

A few have achieved a measure of peace of mind and tranquility even in the absence of the bodies, finding solace in the transcendental—or spiritual closure, according to Garcia.

For some, closure means either forgiving their torturers or rejoining the movement, or both. *(See story on this page.)*

Vengeance

While the PATH seeks non-violent closure, a few survivors and relatives are seeking vengeance and retribution.

A survivor from the Visayas is looking for the people who tortured him, while a younger brother of a trade union organizer in Laguna wants to get even with the head of Task Force OPML.

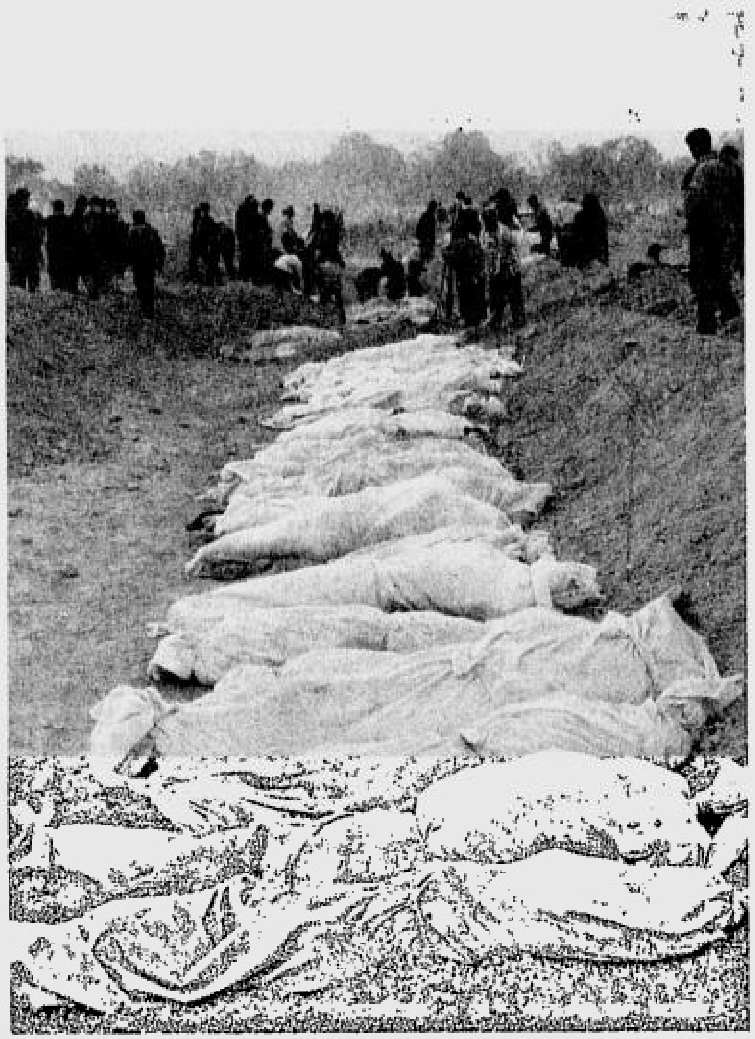
"Why hasn't his executioner been meted out punishment?" the union organizer's brother said. "Pity my nieces who lost their father. They did not even get compensation."

But others reject the settling of scores.

Bernice Galang said she had received an offer: the elimination of the members of Task Force OPML who were responsible for the deaths of her husband and two sisters.

She turned it down. "I told my friend, Enough [of the violence] so that the ranks of widows and orphans will not grow. Let the violence end with me," she said.

Hopes of finding more survivors fade


IRANIAN officials bury the bodies of earthquake victims in a mass grave at the Behesht Zahra cemetery in Bam. REUTERS

BAM, Iran—Survivors and rescuers in Iran's historic city of Bam were jolted by two frightening aftershocks Monday morning that caused some of the few remaining walls to tumble and left a rising cloud of dust over the remains of the city's ancient fortress.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei visited the devastated city and told hundreds of victims who gathered in the street that he shared their grief.

"I've come here to express my condolences and tell you that I share your grief at the beloved ones who have died. They are as if they are my children," he said.

President Mohammad Khatami was expected to arrive later in the day.

More than 21,000 bodies have been retrieved since Friday's 6.6-magnitude earthquake shook the city and surrounding region in southeast Iran, according to provincial government spokesperson Asadollah Iranmanesh.

"Many, many more people remain buried under the rubble, increasing fears of a much greater death toll at the end," Iranmanesh said.

Some officials have expressed fears that the death toll could rise as high as 40,000.

Iranmanesh said Sunday that 10,000 people were hospitalized.

Khamenei urged all Iranians and organizations to do what they could to help.

"All of us are responsible to meet the demands of the survivors," he said. "Aid should continue to come so that, God willing, the city of Bam is rebuilt better and this time stronger than before. We can build a strong and developed city out of this devastation."

Hopes of finding more survivors faded as Monday's sunrise marked 72 hours since the quake hit, entombing thousands of sleeping residents in their homes. Experts say 72 hours is generally the longest people can survive if they are trapped in rubble.

Rescue workers from around the world joined Iranians in searching through powdery debris that left little room for air pockets, which could allow people to survive while awaiting help.

James Brown, spokesperson for a British rescue team, said a human being can survive three to four days without water, and three to four weeks without food.

"There is always hope for survivors," Brown said Monday.

Only one man was pulled alive from the rubble Sunday, Iranmanesh said. A day earlier, officials reported freeing 150 survivors.

Interior Minister Abdolvahed Mousavi Lari said Sunday that the search for survivors would probably end Monday night.

Ted Pearn, coordinator of UN relief operations in Bam, said 1,400 international relief workers were in Bam, part of 35 teams from 26 countries.

Planes from dozens of countries have landed in the provincial capital of Kerman with relief supplies, volunteers and dogs trained to find bodies and survivors. US military C-130 cargo planes were among them, despite long-severed diplomatic relations and US President George W. Bush's characterization of Iran as being part of an "axis of evil" with Iraq and North Korea.

According to Interior Minister Lari, Iran accepted US government help and not Israeli help because Tehran considers the United States a legitimate government, but opposes Israel for its actions against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel "is a force of occupation," he said.

As for Americans, Lari said. "I believe it is possible that they have a humanitarian sensibility in such a dramatic situation."

The traditional sun-dried, mud-brick construction of the houses doomed many occupants, as it has for centuries in quake-prone Iran. Heavy roofs, often sealed with cement or plaster to keep out rain, sit atop mud-brick walls that have no support beams. When walls crumble, roofs smash down, leaving few air pockets and crushing or suffocating anyone inside.

On Sunday, traffic clogged the roads leading in and out of Bam, 1,015 km southeast of Tehran, the Iranian capital. *AP*

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Roadside bombs kill 2 US soldiers, 2 kids

BAGHDAD—Two US soldiers and two Iraqi children died in roadside explosions as more victims of a coordinated guerrilla onslaught on Iraq's holy Shiite city of Karbala succumbed to their wounds, raising the toll to 19 dead and some 200 wounded.

Japan pledged Monday to forgive "the vast majority" of Iraq's nearly $8 billion debt if others do the same, giving a critical boost to the US campaign to have countries relieve a crushing debt. "Japan would be prepared" to eliminate the vast majority of its Iraqi debt if other Paris Club creditors are prepared to do so," said a statement from the foreign ministry of Japan, which holds the largest Iraqi debt.

Representatives of the Russian oil company Lukoil Overseas were expected in Baghdad on Monday to pursue the implementation of a 1997 agreement to develop some of the richest deposits in Iraq, the Russian news agency Tass reported. It quoted a company spokesperson as saying that Lukoil hopes within five years to be pumping 10 million barrels a day in West Qurna, in southern Iraq.

In the northern city of Mosul city, US troops defused a roadside bomb found on Monday morning at a major traffic, an American soldier at the scene told a reporter as helicopters took to the air to search for the assailants.

In central Baghdad on Sunday, a bomb planted beside a road killed two Iraqi children and an American soldier and wounded 14 people on Sunday morning, said US Army Sgt. Patrick Compton of the Army's 1st Armored Division. The wounded include five American soldiers, their Iraqi interpreter and eight members of the Iraqi civil defense corps.

"It was a bad one," Compton said. "It's a real densely populated area of town."

Attackers detonated another roadside bomb later Sunday as a US convoy was traveling on a road near Fallujah, west of Baghdad, killing another American soldier and wounding three, the US military said.

The latest deaths bring the number of American combat deaths since the invasion in March to 325.

Also Sunday, officials said they arrested five Iraqi suspects in the Karbala attacks. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Willing to forgive debt

TOKYO—Providing a critical boost to the US campaign to win debt relief for Iraq, major creditor Japan pledged Monday to forgive "the vast majority" of its Iraqi debt if other Paris Club nations do the same. The announcement, which came after talks in Tokyo between US envoy James A. Baker and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, reversed earlier Japanese hesitancy to participate in Iraqi debt relief. Japan is already providing $5 billion to Iraqi reconstruction. Iraq owes Japan some $4.1 billion, but that number reaches an estimated $7.76 billion when late penalties and other fees are included, the government said earlier this month. *AP*

Blair under fire anew

LONDON—Tony Blair came under renewed pressure Monday to admit he was mistaken on the issue of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the day after the US civil administrator in Baghdad, Paul Bremer, contradicted the British prime minister's claim that "massive evidence" of Saddam Hussein's quest for such arms had been unearthed. "It is undignified for the prime minister, and worrying for his nation, to go on believing a threat which everybody else can see was a fantasy," argued Robin Cook, a former foreign secretary who quit the government over its decision to join the US-led war in Iraq. *AFP*

Taliban blamed

TEHRAN—One Irish and two German tourists kidnapped in southeast Iran and released on Sunday told the press Monday their captors said they were "Talibans linked to the al-Qaida terrorist group." The three were seized three weeks ago while on a cycling trip near Nosrat Abad, on the road between the ancient city of Bam, which was devastated by a killer earthquake Friday, and Zahedan near the border with Pakistan. *AFP*

Gay unions slammed

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II pressed his campaign against gay unions Sunday, calling for greater defense of the institution of marriage between man and woman and saying a "misunderstood" sense of rights was altering it. The Pope's comments came amid a Vatican's campaign to crack down on same-sex unions, which have won legal boosts in recent months following landmark court decisions in Canada, Massachusetts and elsewhere. In his weekly Sunday comments in St. Peter's Square, John Paul said marriage—which the Vatican defines as a sacred union between man and woman—was a "human and divine" gift that should be defended by society. *AP*

Recovery from SARS

TAIPEI—Taiwan's first SARS patient in five months will likely leave the hospital on Tuesday—13 days after he tested positive for the virus, an official said Monday. Tests have shown that the 44-year-old military scientist, who apparently caught SARS while studying the virus, has recovered, said Hong Wei-ho, spokesperson for Hoping Hospital in Taipei. "But we want to repeat the tests several times to be sure he's OK," Hong said. "We're waiting for the latest results, and they might be ready Monday evening." *AP*

Rotten politicians

JAKARTA—Dozens of activists and public figures on Monday launched a national movement which will urge Indonesians not to elect "rotten" politicians in next year's legislative and presidential elections. "Do not choose them, those who rob state coffers, do not choose them, those who make the people suffer," sang popular performer Franky Sahilatua at a rally in a Central Jakarta park. Some 500 people took part in the rally to launch The National Movement Against Electing Rotten Politicians in front of a statue of the country's founding fathers—Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta. *AFP*

Muzzling the media

BANGKOK—Thailand's billionaire prime minister and his supporters are using their political and financial clout to muzzle the media and intimidate those who criticize the government, a journalists' group said. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and a key member of his Thai Rak Thai party have taken stakes in several radio, newspaper and television companies in recent years, and analysts allege they have tried to manipulate press coverage by threatening reporters and their sources. "Some newspapers have been trying to check the work of the government... (but) sources did not dare to express opinions that contradict the government for fear that it would affect their lives, jobs and businesses," the Thai Journalists' Association said in its annual report released Sunday. "The interference in the work of the Thai media has grown more complicated and subtle and is continuing to eat into the media. Government figures are buying shares in media companies and eventually will take over those media companies." *AP*

Actor Bates dies; 69

LONDON—British actor Alan Bates, a pioneer of the "Angry Young Man" school of post-war British theater who also conquered Hollywood with gritty performances, has died of cancer, his agent said. He was 69. Bates died in a London hospital on Saturday with his son and brother at his side. "He had a long battle with cancer," agent Rosalind Chatto said. Bates, versatile and good looking, shot to fame in 1956 in John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger," a ground-breaking play reflecting the social and class turmoils of 1950s England. *Reuters*

Milosevic allies win

BELGRADE, Serbia-Montenegro—Extremist allies of jailed former strongman Slobodan Milosevic won Serbia's parliamentary elections on Sunday. But pro-democracy rivals were consoled by preliminary results showing the extremists short of the majority needed to govern on their own.

Publishing preliminary standings, the State Electoral Commission put the Serbian Radical party first, followed by the moderate nationalist Democratic Party and then the governing pro-western Democratic party in third. Complete official results were not expected before Monday.

The independent Center for Free Elections and Democracy, whose exit polls have been highly accurate in the past, said the Radicals had 82 seats—nearly a third of Serbia's 250-seat parliament—the Democratic Party of Serbia 53, and the Democratic Party 37.

The moderate nationalists have previously ruled out a coalition with the Serbian Radical Party. That would enable the pro-democratic parties that toppled Milosevic in 2000 to form a coalition government—if they put their deep differences aside. *AP*

Guatemala has new president

GUATEMALA CITY—Conservative businessman Oscar Berger took victory on Sunday in Guatemala's second presidential elections since the end of a 36-year civil war, returning power to the country's traditional landed elite.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal gave Berger 56 percent support with results in from more than 70 percent of polling stations and its chair, Oscar Bolanos, declared "the trend is now unchangeable."

Berger, a 57-year-old former Guatemala City mayor backed by the country's farming and banking power brokers, defeated Alvaro Colom, a textile factory owner and leftist politician, who trailed with 44 percent of the vote.

"We are going to work and to show our best abilities, our honor, our spirit of service so that we bring change to Guatemala," Berger said to hundreds of cheering supporters at his campaign headquarters in the capital.

Around him, supporters set off fireworks in celebration and waved flags to rock and pop music. *Reuters*

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Community Inno

Marks Successes at Two Ye

IN ITS two years of existence, Community Innovations Inc (CII) has staked a claim as a dynamic player in the real estate arena. The success of its first project, Verdana Homes, was succeeded by the enthusiastic market response to its high-rise Makati condominium development, The Columns, Ayala Avenue. Now the company extends the Verdana Homes brand with a new subdivision—Verdana Homes Mamplasan, the gateway to the Ayala South community.

An Ayala Land company, CII was created to introduce integrity, vision and quality into the mid-range real estate market. As an Ayala Land subsidiary, CII draws upon the experience, executives, strategies and resources of its parent company. As an independent company, CII sports a flexible and novel approach that allows it to quickly and satisfactorily address the needs and requirements of its target market.

COMMUNITY INNOVATIONS INC.
AN AYALA COMPANY

CII's mission is the creation of well-planned and meticulously designed communities. Whether in a suburban subdivision or an urban tower, CII aims to create places where gracious living, neighborliness, and humanistic values are respected and affirmed. CII achieves this through master planning and innovation, and offers its products at affordable price points and flexible payment terms.

With two ongoing projects and one more on the way, a bright future is clearly in store for CII and its customers.

> CII's mission is the creation of well-planned and meticulously designed communities. Whether in a suburban subdivision or an urban tower, CII aims to create places where gracious living, neighborliness, and humanistic values are respected and affirmed.

THE COMMUNITY Innovati

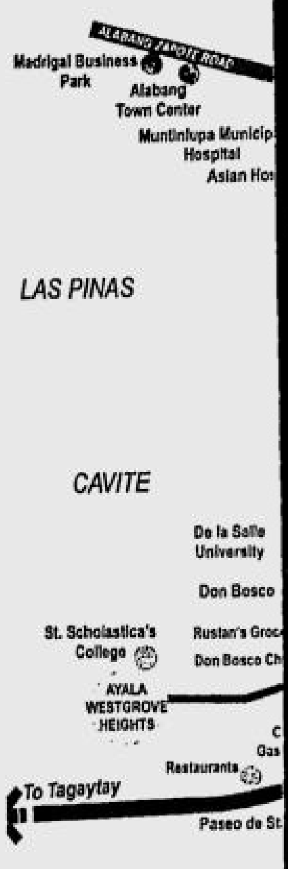
Verdana Homes Is A Success Story

Verdana Homes is an unqualified success for Community Innovations Inc. The company's first project, Verdana Homes, was created to provide a well-planned, quality community within reach of young urban achievers and their families. It proved so popular it sold out within months from launch.

Verdana Homes is a 23-hectare residential subdivision in Bacoor, Cavite. It is located seven kilometers from the booming, upscale Ayala Alabang community established by Ayala Land in the '80s and connects to the Southern Luzon Expressway via the Commerce Avenue and the new Daang Hari national road.

Offering both lots and house-and-lots, Verdana Homes is designed as a complete community from the beginning. House-and-lots in relaxed California architecture encircle a 1.4-hectare park featuring the immense clubhouse, landscaped gardens with actual fruit trees, a fully-stocked playground for children, jogging paths, basketball, open playfield, and more. Lots range from 200 sqm. to 400 sqm. with most of the lots in the 200 sqm. range.

THE GRAND Clubhouse at Verdana Homes



NOW IN Mamplasan, gat
highly desired Verdana H
frontier of Laguna.

A PROJECT of the Department of Public Works and Highways in conjunction with the local governments of Cavite and Metro Manila, Daang Hari was inaugurated last Dec. 13 with a ceremony and parada headed by Senator Manny Villar. This 14-km. road was formally opened 2 days after the inauguration.

Verdana Village Center

Where life is richer.

ACROSS Verdana Homes will be the Verdana Village Center, the first commercial development on Daang Hari Road. Verdana Village Center will provide shopping, dining, recreational and business services for the residents of Verdana Homes and the surrounding areas. It is CII's first commercial real estate venture.

Community Innovations Inc will bring their highly desired Verdana Homes residential brand to the developing frontier of Laguna with Verdana Homes Mamplasan, the young company's latest venture.

Verdana Homes Mamplasan will offer the same meticulous community planning and affordability found in CII's successful first Verdana Homes in Bacoor, while pioneering new opportunities in the Ayala South community. It is located 15 km from the Ayala Alabang and Filinvest area, off the Mamplasan Exit of the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX).

The subdivision will offer lots ranging from 180 sqm to 500 sqm with a modal lot size of 200 sqm. The lots are planned to create "clusters" that allow residents to live in private neighborhoods. The focal point of the development is a central park with various facilities and amenities.

Verdana Homes living does not only mean being part of a master-planned subdivision but entails a total living experience as well. That is why the development will offer superior and complete amenities where the entire Verdana community can commune with each other and with nature.

Like the first, Verdana Homes Mamplasan is geared to fit the needs of young urban achievers and families. The subdivision's location makes it ideal for families with school-age children and teenagers as it is in the hub of the expanding educational community of Laguna, featuring schools such as Brent, Don Bosco, De La Salle University, St. Scholastica's College, College of the Holy Spirit and Colegio de San Agustin.

Verdana Homes Mamplasan is also convenient to places of work and commerce, such as Paseo de Sta. Rosa, Pavilion Mall (an Ayala managed mall right across SLEX), Alabang Town Center, Madrigal Business Park, Laguna Technopark, and Laguna International Industrial Park. It stands at the gateway to Tagaytay and the resort areas of Cavite and Batangas.

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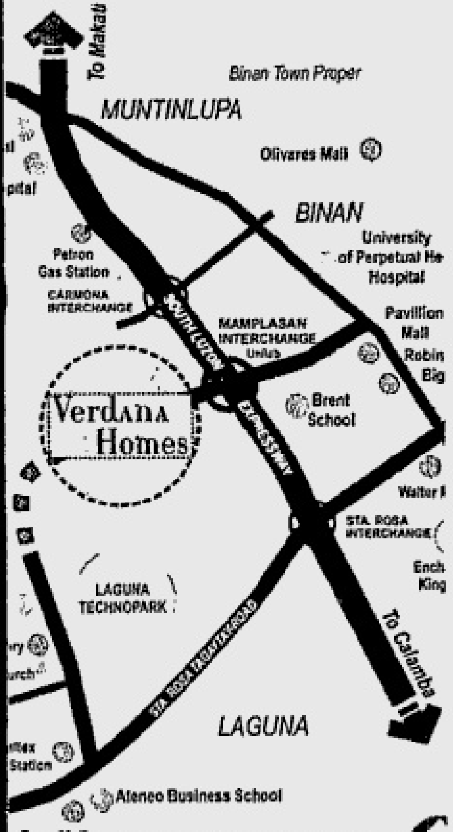
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Robin Big
Verdana Homes
Brent School
Walter
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Ench King
LAGUNA TECHNOPARK
STA. ROSA TAGAYTAY ROAD
To Calamba
LAGUNA
Station
Ateneo Business School
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VICINITY MAP

eway to Ayala South, CII will bring in its
mes residential brand to the developing

THE COLUMNS
AYALA AVENUE

The good life within reach at The Columns, Ayala Avenue

SOLD OUT
SOLD OUT

THE COLUMNS 3 towers being a vision of serenity in the midst of busy business district.

THE RECREATIONAL Club on the 7th floor

The combination of location, comfortable living and affordability

THE COLUMNS, Ayala Avenue, the three-tower residential development from Community Innovations Inc, brings a vision of community and serenity into the heart of the city. For young urban achievers who work in Makati, The Columns, Ayala Avenue provides the perfect place to live.

The Columns, Ayala Avenue will change the way people perceive the urban condominium. In its design, amenities, location, and lifestyle, it makes a statement that the good life is not out of reach.

The Columns, Ayala Avenue is located at the intersection of two major thoroughfares, Ayala Avenue and Sen. Gil Puyat (Buendia) Avenue, poised upon the dynamic Makati central business district. For its residents, their places of work and business, including many top local and international companies, are literally a walk away.

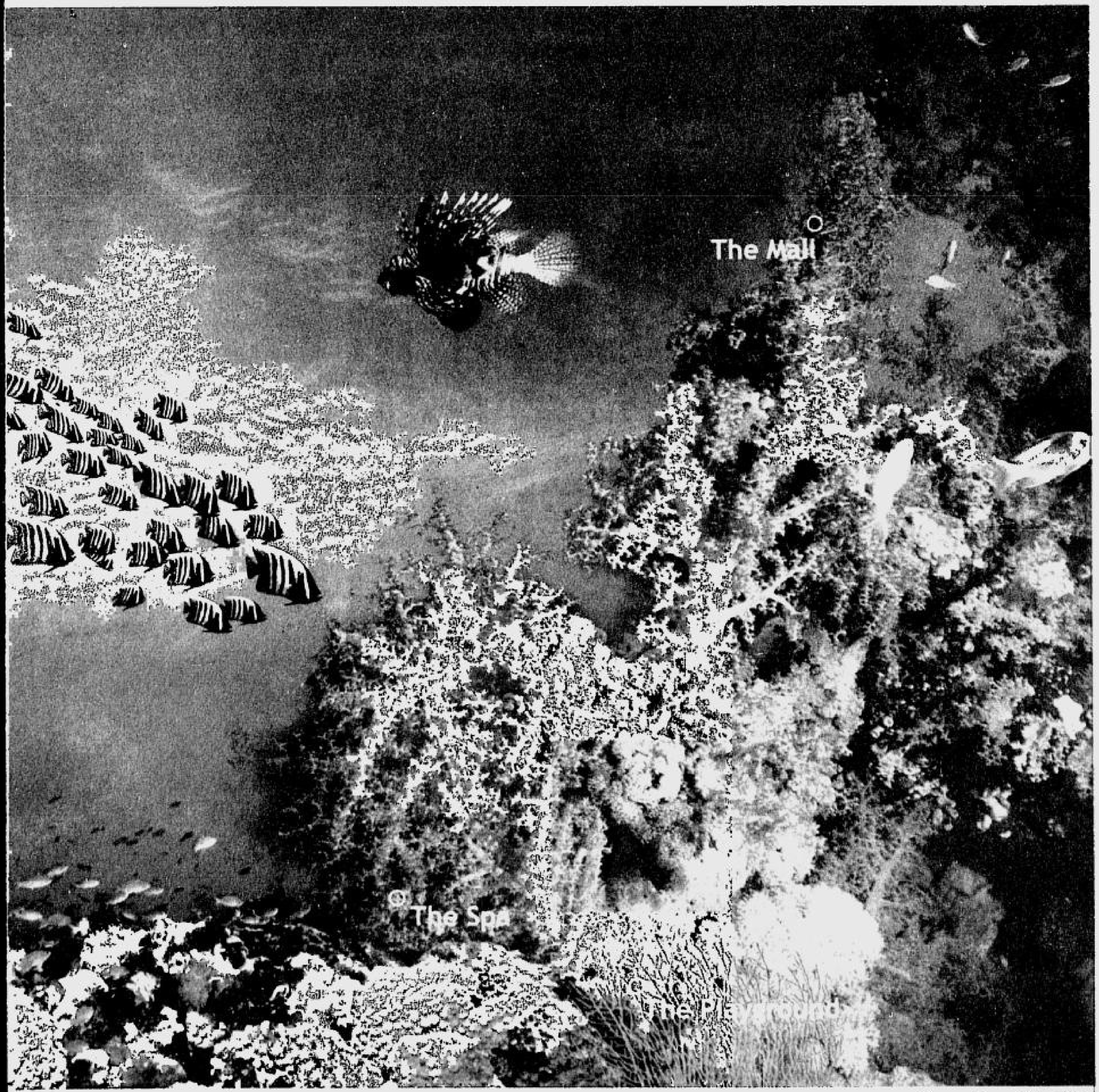
Three towers, 23 stories in height, rise above a seven-story podium for a total of 30 stories at The Columns, Ayala Avenue. The towers contain a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units, at prices well within the reach of young professionals eager to make their first big investment and buy their first home. Angled to catch the morning light and the brilliant bay sunset, designed to combine environmental sensitivity with energy efficiency, the three towers of The Columns make a dynamic and innovative statement in the Makati skyline.

Within the podium The Columns sports amenities that extend and enhance an active lifestyle. Chief among these is the seventh-floor Recreational Club, spanning the entire podium at the base of the three towers, where expected amenities combine with unexpected delights to create the feeling of a country club or village center for residents and their families. Two swimming pools, a fitness center, a game room, a home theater, an outdoor plaza and stage area, an exercise path, even a day care center and playground for the children, are mixed and matched into an organic whole that extends the value and richness The Columns provides.

Sales have outpaced expectations, with Towers 1 and 2 selling out in months. Tower 3 is now open for sales.

Since its launch, The Columns, Ayala Avenue has been on everyone's lips. It may be the most talked-about property among the young urban achievers it seeks to serve. Sales have outpaced expectations, with Tower 1 selling out in less than four months, and Tower 2 following suit so quickly that the opening of sales for Tower 3 was moved up to meet the demand. The combination of location, affordability, amenities, and its Ayala Land pedigree through CII, has tapped into the needs and ambitions of young men and women throughout the city, as well as attracting investors from across the country and even overseas.

As the shapes of its towers visibly rise from its site, word-of-mouth about the project has become almost self-sustaining, proving that with The Columns, Ayala Avenue, CII has earned another success.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Stuck in the mire

EDITORIAL

TODAY, the 107th anniversary of the martyrdom of Jose Rizal, it might be useful to reflect on what he said about education, government and politics.

Education, because the poor education or miseducation of the great majority of the people is largely to blame for the election in the past half century or so of officials who have made a mess of the nation. Government, because Manuel Quezon's preferred option—" a government run like hell by Filipinos"—seems to have come true. And politics because it is an excess of partisan politics that has often blocked efforts to push the social and economic development of the country.

Rizal, like the other Propagandists, deplored the defects of the educational system instituted by the Spaniards in the Philippines. But many of his observations still hold true today. Rizal said he believed that "the cause of our backwardness and ignorance is the lack of means of education, the vice that afflicts us from the beginning until the end of our careers."

But surely there are many more teachers, school buildings and books available now than there were during Rizal's time? Still, a bigger teaching staff and more physical facilities do not automatically mean a better education for Filipinos. Our literacy rate is apparently high; but what is our functional literacy rating? What about the content of the curriculum? Some have observed that many graduates of Philippine schools and colleges are illiterate in two languages. They also land in the bottom in international competitions on science and mathematics.

One strong evidence of the poor education or miseducation of the Filipino is the election of incompetents to the highest positions in government. If the Filipino voter were more intelligent or better educated, he would not be electing incompetent and intellectually unqualified candidates as president, vice president, senator, congressman, governor or mayor. And yet every election year sees the election of more and more incompetent officials.

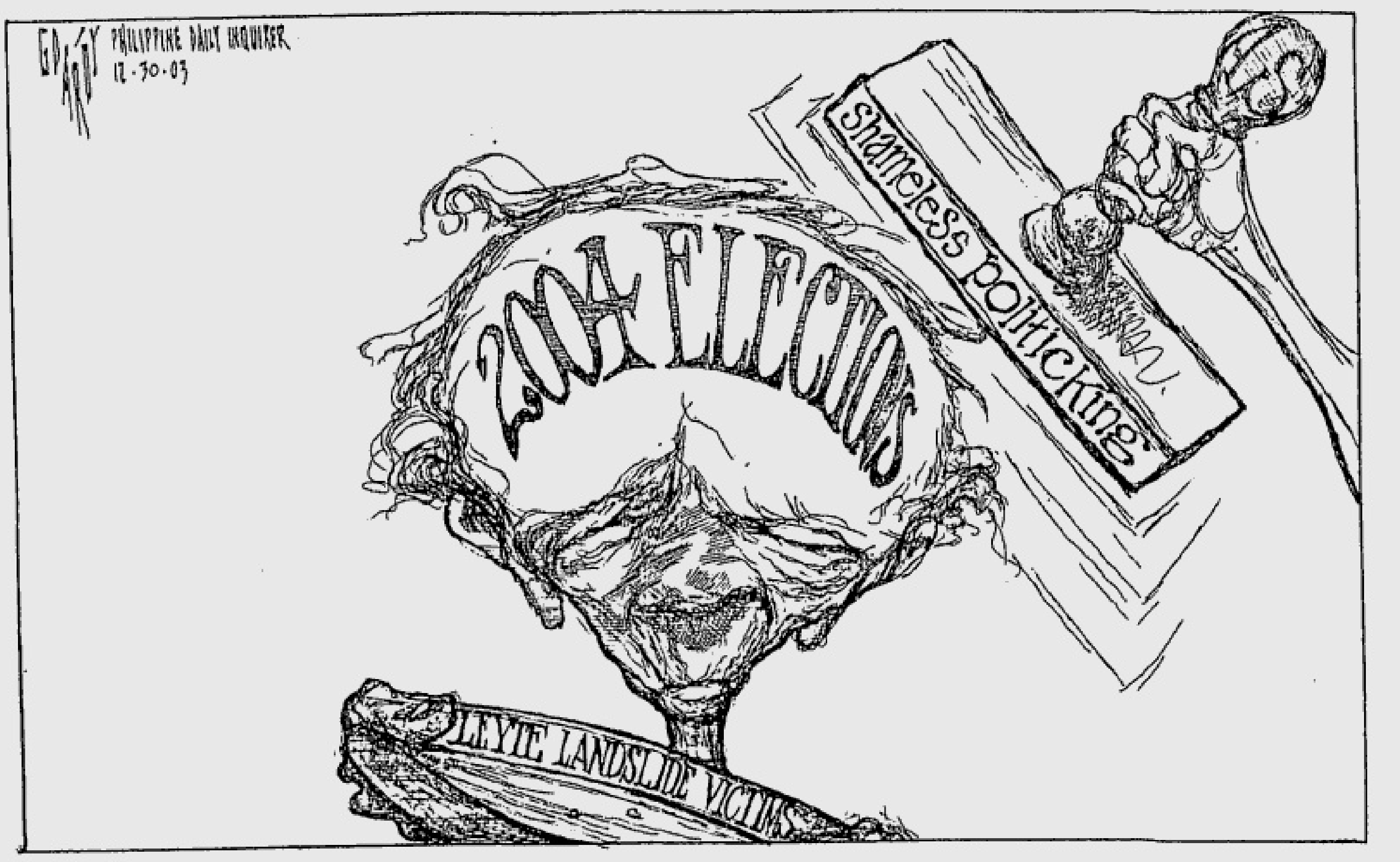
Because we do not know how to choose the right leaders, we are condemned to suffer from bad government. Rizal said in "The Indolence of the Filipinos": "People and government are correlated and complementary. A stupid government is an anomaly among a righteous people, just as a corrupt people cannot exist under just rulers and wise laws. Like people, like government we will say, paraphrasing a popular adage."

Of course, there were times when the people had had enough of corrupt and incompetent leaders and deposed them—in Edsa I and Edsa II. But after these cataclysmic events, what? It's back to the same corrupt system, it's back to the usual level of mediocrity and incompetence. If the people were better educated, they would elect better officials, and they would require continuing accountability from their public servants. They would require the highest level of service from the officials who owe their positions to them.

In a letter to Blumentritt dated Aug. 7, 1888, Rizal said: "Politics, when it blazes between tyrants and oppressed peoples, has no heart or brains but fangs, poison and vengeance." Such a strong approach may have been necessary in the time of the Propaganda. But now, substitute "parties" for "tyrants and oppressed peoples," and he might as well be talking about the state of Philippine politics today. The air is filled with "poison and vengeance." There is no meaningful and intelligent debate on the issues that matter most to the people. The promotion of personality cults and show-biz gimmicks and mudslinging take the place of political discussion during election campaigns.

Rizal was never elected to any government post, but he was a true leader. In a letter to Juan Zulueta on Aug. 14, 1891, he said that his ambition "is not to win honors or hold positions but to see that what is just, exact, suitable, is done in political matters." His position is the opposite of that of most candidates today who seek not to advance the public interest after they are elected but who promote their selfish interests as well as the interests of their families, friends or special groups. And most candidates view public office not as an opportunity for service to their community and the nation but as a source of wealth, power and privilege.

Rizal said in "The Philippines a Century Hence": "Every country meets the fate that she deserves…" Does our nation deserve its fate? Are we condemned to be forever the basket case of Asia? Can we not educate ourselves better, elect the right officials and muster the political will to lift ourselves from the mire of economic and social misery where we've been stuck for decades?



You, too, can be a fortune teller

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THIS is that time of the year when fortune tellers, or *manghuhula*, of all sorts, shapes and sizes crawl out of the woodwork, look into their crystal balls, their playing cards or the palms of your hands and predict what's going to happen in the new year. There are Filipinos who swear by their *manghuhula* or medium and make important decisions based on the latter's predictions. They include former President Ferdinand Marcos. (I wonder if his *manghuhula* was able to see that he would be kicked out by the people in a peaceful revolution.) Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. opens his Bible each morning and is guided during the day by what is written on the page that is revealed.

Thus; it is not only the superstitious or the uneducated who believe in fortune tellers and in the chance opening of the Bible. Even presidents and Supreme Court justices do.

But making decisions is a lonely chore. The burden of responsibility—and feelings of guilt later when the decision turns out to be wrong—is very heavy. So decision makers want to be sure, or at least have somebody to share the guilt. So they turn to the fortune teller for help.

It is not only in decision making that fortune tellers wield influence. In times of misery, misfortune and uncertainty, people from all walks of life turn to them for guidance. They want to be sure, or at least to have an edge over the others—no level playing field for them. People in love, people with lost relatives or treasures, people looking for jobs, people wanting to know if they would pass important examinations, even fortune hunters searching for the fabled Yamashita Treasure—they all seek the help of the *manghuhula*.

It is not hard to find them. Just go to Quiapo, beside the church, and you will have at least a dozen of them vying to serve you for a fee. Or you can drive around Manila and you will see signs advertising this or that "Madame" to tell your fortune. And you have television and the newspapers competing with one another in featuring fortune tellers, perhaps for lack of anything better or sensible to present at this time of year.

The *manghuhula* come by many names (seer, soothsayer, sorcerer, prophet, fortune teller, crystal ball-gazer, star-gazer, psychic, etc.), costumes, ages, sex, and what have you, but they have one thing in common: they are all pulling your leg. Not their fault but yours. In your gullibility you go to them, and they oblige you by telling you stories that you like to hear.

You don't have to be ashamed if you go to them because for centuries fortune tellers have been doing the same thing. They did it to kings and queens, emperors and empresses, czars and czarinas, and nobles of all sorts. Among the more famous of them was Rasputin who mesmerized the Russian czarina so much that the nobles decided to kill him. And look what happened later to her and her family.

It is easy to be a fortune teller actually. You don't even need a crystal ball or a deck of cards (they are only props). All you need is the gift of gab (be a *bolero*, in other words, just like those who sell fake gold bars and treasure maps) and a lot of chutzpah.

It's quite simple, really. You just couch your predictions in general terms. And you say what your customer wants to hear.

Even the prophecies of Nostradamus are couched in general terms. They can apply to almost anything. It depends on those making the interpretations. It is easy to make the connections of events to his prophecies after the fact.

Have you noticed how modern fortune tellers repeatedly trumpet their predictions when anything remotely resembling them happens, but when they turn out to be duds, they keep silent and their wrong predictions are forgotten?

It is also easy to say what the customer wants to hear. You feed his ego. If a jack of hearts appears in a deck of cards, for example, you say that a young man is secretly in love with her. If the customer is a male, you wait for the queen, and say a woman is secretly in love with him. They feel flattered and they think back to any person who may have cast a glance at him or her and think that maybe the one. If it is a jack or queen of diamonds, you say that the secret lover is rich, which thrills the customer. If it is a king of spades, you warn the customer to be wary of the guy because he is married or his intentions are not honorable.

You tell the customer "*suswertehin siya*," and he or she would get rich. They like that even better. You tell him, you will land a job soon and pass the exams. If he doesn't and goes back to you to complain, you say that he did something wrong. Then tell his fortune again (for another fee) and advise him to be patient.

If he's looking for a lost relative or treasure, you say they're somewhere near but you can't say exactly where because the crystal ball or the cards are hazy. Maybe it will be clearer the next time, which means he would come back and pay another fee.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not knocking the *manghuhula*. They have a role to perform in society. They give comfort to those who are distressed and unsure of themselves. They give the same service as the psychiatrists, priests, close friends and relatives to whom people unburden themselves and get comforting advice in return. Go and listen to them if they make you happy.

But don't forget: They could be pulling your leg.

Then and now

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

A YEAR ago today, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo delivered a speech in Baguio on Jose Rizal's death anniversary. Reading the writing on the wall, she bid the nation goodbye, saying in part: .

"Today, we are honoring Jose Rizal. Our national hero is the most gifted Filipino who ever lived, truly the pride of the Malayan race.

"A century ago, he made the ultimate sacrifice for the Filipino people, giving up his life at Luneta field. Jose Rizal's martyrdom led to the creation of the Philippine Republic in 1898.

"As we honor Jose Rizal today, it is fitting that I ask each Filipino to make also sacrifices for our country. Our country needs our help.

"I believe that we can create a strong and modern Philippine Republic, but it will take personal sacrifice from each one of us.

"The convergence of national stresses has led to the sense of gloom that many of our citizens now talk of. There is a feeling of too much negativism and conflict in our society

"However, we also know that we will soon enter the political period leading up to the elections in 2004. My reading on the political winds tells me that the 2004 election may well go down in history as among our most bitterly contested elections ever. This is because of the deep social and political division that we now have.

"If this is true, then sincere efforts to launch programs will run the risk of being derailed by political fighting leading up to the elections.

"The government in place after 2004 may merely end up inheriting a country as deeply divided as ever. Consequently, we may end up stalling national growth for a few years more as a result of lost momentum.

"In view of all these factors, I have decided not to run for president during the election of 2004.

"If I were to run, it will require a major political effort on my part. But since I'm among the principal figures in the divisive national events for the last two or three years, my political efforts can only result in never-ending divisiveness.

"On the other hand, relieved of the burden of politics, I can devote the last year and half of my administration to the following:

"First, strengthening economy.

"Second, healing the deep divisions within our society.

"Third, working for clean and honest elections in 2004.

"If we achieve these, my successor as president will be in a good position to lead the Philippines through the next decisive steps for the strong and modern society. United, we can see this dream come true within our lifetime.

"Thus, I appeal to each Filipino to help in this endeavor. Following the example of Jose Rizal, let us think of country and not just of self."

On Dec. 29, 1896, Jose Rizal wrote a love poem to his beloved country inside his cell in Fort Santiago. Though facing death, he wrote so much better than GMA's speechwriters who were merely facing obscurity. He wrote in part, as translated by Charles E. Derbyshire, who seems to have gone over the top trying to retain the Spanish lushness;

"Farewell, dear fatherland, clime of the sun caressed/ Pearl of the Orient seas, our Eden lost!/ Gladly now I go to give thee this faded life's best/ And were it brighter, fresher or more blest,/ Still would I give it thee, nor count the cost.

"On the field of battle, 'mid the frenzy of light,/ Others have given their lives, without doubt or heed;/ The place matters not—cypress or laurel or lily white,/ Scaffold or open plain, combat o martyrdom's plight,/ 'Tis ever the same, to serve our home and country's need.

"I die just when I see the dawn break,/ Through the gloom of night, to herald the day;/ And if color is lacking my blood thou shalt take/ Pour'd out at need for thy dear sake,/To dye with its crimson the waking ray./ My dreams, when life first opened to me,/ My dreams, when the hopes of youth beat high,/ Were to see thy lov'd face, O gem of the Orient sea./ From gloom and grief, from care and sorrow free;/No blush on thy brow, no tear in thine eye.

"Dream of my life, my living and burning desire,/ All hail! cries the soul that is now to take flight;/All hail! And sweet it is for thee to expire,/ To die for thy sake, that thou mayst aspire,/ And sleep in thy bosom eternity's long night./ If over my grave some day though seest grow,/ In the grassy sod, a humble flower,/ Draw it to thy lips and kiss my soul so,/ While I may feel on my brow in the cold tomb below/ The touch of thy tenderness, thy breath's warm power.

"When even my grave is remembered no more,/ Unmark'd by never a cross or a stone;' Let the plow sweep through it, the spade turn it o'er/ That my ashes may carpet thy earthy floor,/ Before into nothingness at last they are blown./Then will oblivion bring to me no care;/ As over thy vales and plains I sweep;

Throbbing and cleansed in thy space and air,/ With color and light, with song and lament I fare,/ Ever repeating the faith that I keep.

"My Fatherland ador'd that sadness to my sorrow lends,/Beloved Filipinas, hear now my last goodbye!/ I give thee all; parents and kindred and friends;/ For I go where no slave before the oppressor bends,/ Where faith can never kill, and God reigns e'er on high!/ Farewell to you all, from my soul torn away,/ Friends of my childhood in home dispossessed!/ Give thanks that I rest from the wearisome day!/ Farewell to thee, too, sweet friend that lightened my way;/Beloved creatures all, farewell! In death there is rest!"

A day later, they led Rizal out of his cell and executed him. Half a year later, GMA decided to run anyway.

What can I say? Height is deceptive, they shot the wrong person at the Luneta.

Pinoys welcome dual citizenship law

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

SEATTLE—We left this northern Pacific coastal city last Sunday morning to return to Portland and then on to San Francisco. There still was no snow as we left Seattle, made famous by the movie of Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan, "Sleepless in Seattle." This city is famous for its Pike Market at the harbor downtown, where tourists and natives flock to get fresh fish and seafood. A favorite game raucous fish vendors play involves throwing huge salmons to one another to catch, like they were tossing football.

Seattle is also the home of the Boeing aircraft industry. The world's richest man, Microsoft's Bill Gates, started out here, and he lives in a luxurious estate on Mercer Island. Seattle has the reputation of having the biggest number of millionaires under 40 years, many of them employees of Microsoft who received now valuable shares from Gates.

It was also the site of the first of the militant mass actions against the annual meetings of the World Trade Organization in recent years, which resulted in store windows being smashed and provoked a violent reaction from the police who were trying to break up the demonstrations.

* * *

Filipinos in the West Coast I've spoken to welcome the passage of the dual citizenship as it enables them to have the best of both worlds. Now they can earn their dollars in the US but retire, if they choose to, in the land of their birth (or that of their fathers) as its citizens as well. The new law enables Pinoys overseas to, among other rights, acquire property in RP, which is a big come-on for retirement there. Actually many Filipinos in the US are attracted by the prospect of having a second home in RP where the elderly can seek refuge from the winter months. A good number also want to grow old in their native province, whose laidback lifestyle they see as a respite from a life of constant toil in the US. They relish the prospect of having house help at last, little realizing that maids don't come easy anymore in the Philippines.

* * *

I have not visited America as often as I have visited Europe. In fact, there was a time when I didn't visit the US for over 20 years. But now that I have been here for about two weeks, it's fascinating to savor the American way of life. As I said earlier, I am awed by the power of the consumer in America, something one does not see in Europe and certainly not in Asia. No complaint or query about a purchase can be so small that it is ignored by a store, even if it's the biggest department store chain. As has been repeatedly pointed out by Pinoys here, in the cut-throat competition, no store wants to lose customers and it will do everything to lure them away from the rival store. Recently some Pinoys spoke about a new neighborhood grocery store that gave away gift items every morning for 10 days to the first 200 visitors, never mind if the same people showed up.

* * *

My sister-in-law Juliet Angulo pointed out that if a shopper tells one store that its rival is selling the same item at a lower price, it will take the trouble of calling up the second store to verify, and if the customer's claim turns out to be true, the item will be sold to him at the lower price. The stores also accept returned items within a specified date (as long as 10 days at times), with no questions asked, under certain conditions. This practice, however, is abused. For instance, a customer would buy a dress over the holidays and return it after having worn it, say for Christmas. In fact, during the days immediately after Christmas customers are advised to stay away from stores, as there are long lines of people returning items.

* * *

I am also awed by the American drive for efficiency and obsession with increasing productivity. Driving into an outlet of Arby's for some to-go beef sandwiches, we read a sign that said that if within the next 55 seconds, as you turn the short curve, you don't get all your orders, you get a free beef sandwich. My sister-in-law recalls that one Bank of America gave a cash reward to any client who is not attended to within three minutes by a teller. Efficiency is at a premium here because there are no helpers and one has to rely on one's wits to get by. Independence is a prized American virtue and Filipinos who grow up in America learn it, sometimes to the chagrin of their RP-nurtured folks. In the Philippines, 10 people do the job of one person here.

* * *

Having been a longtime admirer of rugged action star John Wayne, I felt good taking a flight out of what used to be the small Orange County Airport in Irvine, California, which has been renamed John Wayne Airport. I also note that the airport in Burbank has been renamed Bob Hope Airport after the very popular comedian who died at the age of 100. Someone in our group wisecracked that in California airports are being renamed after Hollywood stars, but in the Philippines they are elected president of the country. He was referring, of course, to former President Joseph Estrada, and now to Fernando Poe Jr., one of the presidential aspirants in May 2004 elections.

But honoring actors here is not confined to renaming airports after them. One recalls that Ronald Reagan became US president after serving as two-time California governor. Clint Eastwood became mayor of Carmel also in California, and now "Terminator" star Arnold Schwarzenegger is its governor following a recall election. Will the latter pave the way for more stars in politics? Perhaps only in California, a state like no other here.

The hope of the nation

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

BECAUSE the country commemorates today the execution of Jose Rizal, himself a young man when he sacrificed his life for the nation's freedom, let's turn our attention to the Filipino youth. It was Rizal, after all, who wrote that the youth are the "hope of the nation," a thought often repeated and quoted in the century since his death, but usually contradicted by what those who quote Rizal end up legislating, enacting and implementing.

Yes, the youth are the future, but in the meantime they have needs, wants, aspirations and obstacles to meet and overcome. Yes, the youth have the whole future ahead of them, but they also have the present to contend with, and all its challenges and dilemmas to conquer. Yes, they will be the future leaders of the land, but even by their sheer number, they already have the capacity to change this nation's course.

Today, three out of every five voters are between the ages of 18 and 35. If they could, by dint of vast organizing effort, craft a common agenda for change and agree on a list of candidates they will support, they could hold the next batch of officials at the national and local levels beholden to them and thereby initiate real basic change in our politics and government.

The only trouble is that it is notoriously difficult to unite young Filipinos. Despite their number and their vast store of energy and vision, they have yet to install their own elected youth party-list representatives, for instance. And though they have their foot in the door of governance through the Sangguniang Kabataan, they have allowed themselves to be sidelined and some have even proven to be all too willing apprentices in the craft of corruption.

* * *

BUT young Filipinos, at least according to a national survey, also hold on to very clear and attainable dreams for themselves and their families.

A common aspiration among adolescents, it was found out, is to finish their education. "They see schooling as a key to all the other things that they aspire for," including a successful career, financial stability and even a harmonious family life.

The latest Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Survey reports that, lifestyle stories to the contrary, young Filipinos continue to look positively on marriage, with the "ideal" age for women pegged at 25 and that for men at 27. Again contrary to the clichés of popular Westernized culture, the majority of young Filipino men say they do want to get married although they want to postpone marriage until after they deem themselves financially secure. Young women, on the other hand, say they first want to graduate from college, succeed in their careers and repay their parents and families.

This is a generation to whom the frontiers of knowledge are wide-open and virtually limitless. No field of knowledge, no arcane data, not even the most insignificant trivia is beyond their reach or comprehension.

To the young, connectivity is all—keeping in touch with friends, family, strangers, to the "hottest" and "hippest" of trends—through cell phones, e-mail, the Internet, 'zines and the media.

* * *

AND yet, even if today's youth are perhaps more knowledgeable, more savvy, more aware than their elders, the generation of decision-makers tend to view young people as largely unformed and amorphous. To many adults in government and social institutions, young people are largely faceless and malleable until they reach adulthood.

"Adults tend to see young people through the lens of their own interests and concerns," the State of the Philippine Population Report for 2003 says. So it is that programs and policies enacted ostensibly to "help" the young, or "assist" them in their quest for fulfillment, are in reality meant to assuage the fears, apprehensions and insecurities of adults about young people.

That's why at the end of a youth congress on sexual and reproductive rights, the participants asserted that "young people must make their own decisions free from external pressure, dictates and coercion."

In other words, no matter how good or selfless our intentions, none of our high-minded, big-hearted projects and programs will mean much to young people if they themselves did not take part in identifying the problem, articulating its parameters, searching for solutions, and implementing them. If they do not feel "ownership," young people will not feel committed or even attracted to it.

* * *

TO BE sure, young Filipinos today face many problems.

A big number have been forced to drop out of school, because of poverty, the need to find work, or disinclination to do school work. Many out-of-school youth want to be productive and to help their families, but joblessness—and being idle—is a problem that hounds so many of them. Young people have plenty of ideas and boundless energy to transform these into reality. But banks will not gamble on their youth and routinely refuse credit. Employers are suspicious and ever on the look out for youthful infractions. Others are simply out to exploit a young person's ignorance of the law and lack of assertiveness.

Too many young people are becoming parents before they are ready to live up to the responsibilities. Around 30 percent of the estimated 1.7 million babies born here every year are born to teen mothers. By age 24, a Filipina would, on average, have already borne one child.

Social and health issues like drug addiction, alcohol abuse, violence against women are serious threats to the well-being of young people not just because these are unhealthy and hazardous by themselves, but also because they tend to increase a young person's vulnerability to even riskier consequences, including unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and unsafe abortions.

Senior moments

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

I WAS going to continue writing this perfectly serious and educational article about Rizal's execution, the subject being appropriate and so on at this time of year and convince some non-believers how absolutely serious I am when I thought, what the heck who needs all this gravity? It's Christmas, isn't it? So I thought I'd give you a good laugh instead, seeing as it's the end of 2003 and I don't know where the year has gone. Come to think of it I don't know where 2001 and 2002 went either.

Hmmm... Now about those senior moments. This is one of those stories that go under the heading of "A funny thing happened on the way to..."

You must have heard about people who wander into a room wondering what they're looking for, which is almost the same as going up the stairs to get something and then forgetting what it was when you reach the top. Or dialing a number and when someone answers you've totally forgotten who you called. There's also the party where you appear a day earlier or a day later. Stuff like these are known as senior moments.

My friends and I went through eras when we used to discuss boyfriends, then weddings, then pregnancies, babies and *yayas*. There were the years of children's parties, PTA meetings (I still have dresses I describe as PTA style, i.e. respectable, responsible and spare me), those terrible teens full of growing pains (it is said the children grew and you had the pains). It dawned on us several decades later that we were now talking about aches and pains and exchanging names of medicines and doctors and whose cholesterol and triglycerides were higher. Yikes... now it's senior moments.

Anyway, so here I am in the good Year of our Lord 2003 powdered and puffed (wasn't quite huffing and puffing but almost) having managed a Christmas lunch with the staff, gift-giving, a fitting with Mang Ben, squeezed in an appointment with Manny at the parlor, gone home, sent last-minute presents, given last minute instructions for the Christmas lunch tomorrow (short on ice, soft drinks, you know that kind of thing) and gotten into the car promptly, forgetting a check I had been asked to deliver some weeks before.

I'm on my way to Mass and Christmas dinner at some friend's house and I'm late, of course. The traffic isn't bad, so having forgotten the check I thought it no problem to let the driver go back and drop it off. Anyway it was all in the Makati area. I call the house and tell the girl to get the envelope on my night table, and the driver would return for it. Simple.

In the meantime I'm still on the phone, and we go past the street where Cookie's house is located. I tell the driver, "*Nalampasan natin*. We'll have to go back. Turn left onto the next street." At this point, the girl is repeating my instructions, and I'm telling the driver he has to go back and pick up the check. I am also writing the name of the recipient when, lo and behold, I see all these cars and I tell the driver, "Stop. Come back in an hour, *na lang*."

As I get out, I ask the security guard if the Mass is finished and he answers, "*Kanina pa*."

"No way," I say, annoyed and complaining that I was going to have to go to Mass the following day and "it's not even eight!" Be that as it may, he directs me toward the garden and I'm thinking, "Gee, I didn't know Cookie had remodeled her house" since the entrance used to be at the left and not through the garden. Next a little girl and her *yaya* appear, which is okay since she has a host of nephews and nieces, but it does seem unusually quiet. Well, I knew she was doing some repairs but I didn't think it was an entire renovation, especially when I step into the hall and see this wide open space.

On one side a pianist is playing something soft and classical, accompanied by a violinist. I didn't think Cookie was on to classical music, but what the heck, it's Christmas. At the end of the room beside the garden are three tables with people having dinner. This is again odd since Cookie's and Bolo's assorted in-laws add up to the hundreds (okay, dozens). But since I'm not wearing my glasses, at this distance everything's kinda blurred.

To top it all, there's some kind of glass-covered sitting area that I certainly don't remember. The suspicion is dawning on me that oops, there's something very wrong here. But there's no going back since people are looking at me. So I go forward and who do I see? My friend John and I don't know he was a friend of Cookie's. Beside him is Jonathan, which is logical, but then there's Luli and next thing I know Tony Boy stands up and I think, "Oh, sh.. it's the wrong house!"

At this point, I motion to John to get over here and get me outta here quickly. Tony Boy is saying, "Please have a drink. Have some dinner." And I'm stuttering (I don't as a rule stutter, but this is special), "Thank you very much I'm expected at Mass at (blank's)," when I suddenly remember I sent the driver home and told him to come back in an hour!

A tall lovely wraith comes forward, hand extended, and says, "I'm Gretchen," and I'm shaking hands saying, "Hi, Merry Christmas" and "John, excuse me, but can you drop me off?"

Whee, we finally make it out of there with wretched John (who in the spirit of the season, etc. was kind enough to drive me to the next street) smiling and saying, "*Dyahe ka, no?*"

The Baby Jesus was merciful and the priest was just intoning, "In the name of the Father..." as I come in, when who do I see (you'd never guess) but Jose Pidal!

Thank God, Christmas comes but once a year. I don't think I can take more of this.

Keep them stupid

YOUNG BLOOD

Carlos Alfonso Q. Santos

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

EVERY time my friends and I go out for dinner, our conversation almost invariably turns to politics. My friend Chico likes to think it's because we're sophisticated, well-educated, high-minded and accomplished professionals, but I think it's more because there's a limit to how long we can talk about Kris Aquino's sordid love affairs before going cross-eyed.

Don't get me wrong. When we talk politics, we hardly ever analyze it. We just take potshots at politicians, saying things like, "Erap is a turd." One of my more articulate friends might amplify that statement by saying, "Erap is a big, fat turd." And that's usually pretty much the extent of our discussions on politics, since most of us have neither the time nor the energy to go through the newspapers to look for real news. (News by definition is an event that affects a lot of people, and Kris Aquino contracting STD is not news, except to someone who had sex with her.)

Sometimes we do get into a serious discussion about our country's sorry state. We wonder how an otherwise intelligent people almost always end up voting absolute morons into office. Some ignorant, pseudo-liberal American expatriates opine that we have defective brains, a thesis I refuse to accept for reasons of pride. I think we're no dumber than Californians, who elected Ahh-nold governor. The answer lies in an organization established long ago to prevent the development of critical thinking among Filipinos. It is called the National IQ Reduction Commission (NIQRC).

The NIQRC was founded in 1521 by a bunch of starving Spanish conquistadores in Limasawa. The conquest was not going well. They were hopelessly lost (they were really looking for Malacca) and Lapu-Lapu had just killed Magellan. The Spaniards realized that if they wanted to claim the land, they would have to make the natives dumber. So they began a number of IQ reduction programs, all coordinated by the NIQRC.

The most successful initiative at that time was taken by the Catholic Church. The *fraile* (Spanish word for "horny cretin") pretended to preach the Gospel, but actually aimed to impose blind obedience and servitude. Every Sunday, homilies throughout the archipelago essentially revolved around one theme: You are dirty, uneducated, learning-impaired idiots who need white men to manage your affairs.

When the Americans bought the Philippines three centuries later, they asked the Spaniards what the secret was to holding on to a colony for so long. A former governor general answered, "It's simple: Keep them stupid."

The Americans took this advice to heart and did their utmost in keeping our IQs low. Instead of using the Church, however, they established the public school system. Practically every government ministry was eventually turned over to a Filipino—except the Department of Education (I am not making this up, I swear). With a condescending smile and a great deal of false charm, the Americans taught English and Math and the Boogie, but left Critical Thinking out on purpose. They were afraid that if anyone actually started thinking, we would realize that it was just a little bit weird that the United States, itself a former colony that had to wage a bloody revolution to win its freedom, was now taking the right to self-determination away from another people.

The Americans left after World War II when they realized it was too expensive to fix a war-torn country. (They kept Guam though, for posterity's sake.)

Our nation's new leaders retained the NIQRC, now a major albeit invisible force. They had to find another way of keeping us stupid though. Sunday Mass was no longer effective since no one went to church anymore and those who did invariably fell asleep after the entrance hymn. The public school system, on the other hand, was too expensive. If the government had to build schools, pay teachers and buy books, there would be hardly enough funds to set aside for graft and corruption (which eats up 50 percent of the budget).

So under the auspices of the elected officials of the newly independent Philippine Republic, the folks over at the NIQRC received a new mandate: set up a cost-effective IQ reduction program. They, of course, outdid themselves and cooked up the best scheme yet: the soap opera.

It is a scientifically proven fact that soap operas decrease an average human's IQ by half a point per episode. The characters and story lines are so flat and utterly lacking in depth that the viewer's IQ almost invariably drops.

I am one of the lucky few who are resistant to this unhappy effect: I watched Gladys Reyes torment Judy Ann Santos in "Mara Clara" for 10 years, yet *I stil know haw tu spel.*

Moreover, the soaps had an effect that not even the NIQRC foresaw: people who remained glued to the TV long enough not only reduced their IQ but also developed an alternate escapist reality, delusional, make-believe world where they are Claudine Barretto's best friend, Jolina Magdangal's textmate or Jericho Rosales' lover. We developed a relationship with the cast that was so intense that we mistook reel life for real life. Episode after episode, our deadened minds and souls shared the characters' joys, fears, hopes, loves, aspirations and dreams, only to forget our own aspirations and dreams. We neglected the world we inhabited, a society in danger of imploding from decades, nay centuries, of cultural, intellectual and moral stagnation. We sank to the depths of ignorance and self-delusion—and elected Erap president. What absolute folly!

That's where we are now. Unless we start dong something about it, I am afraid that the twisted minds who run the NIQRC are well on their way to putting FPJ in Malacañang, pardoning Erap and setting us back another century or two. Those of us who are addicted to soap operas must realize that these are designed to reduce our IQ and disconnect us from reality. The addiction isn't hard to break—repeat after me:

"Kristine Hermosa is not my long-lost sister."

"Claudine Baretto is not my best friend."

"Jericho Rosales is not in love with me."

"I am not the long-lost daughter of a wealthy industrialist."

And finally:

"I will not vote for FPJ in the coming presidential elections despite the fact that I think Susan Roces will make a lovely first lady."

Say these again and again, and the spell will be broken. I am afraid, though, that it may be too late. Should FPJ win, those of us who have successfully gotten out of IQ-reduction programs will have just have to sigh, move on and resist the urge to jump into Manila Bay and swim to Vietnam.

Carlos Alfonso Q. Santos, 27, is a biologist and a physician.

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The National Association of Philippine Newspapers

No historical light, only shadows

THE GOVERNMENT has no money because it is trapped in a financial crisis, according to former Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, but the Department of Tourism and the Intramuros Administration appear to have plenty of public funds to put up a new building in Victoria and Santa Lucía Streets to house a Light and Sound Museum that distorts Philippine history and unfairly blackens Spain at this late date.

To begin with, the "history" which that Light and Sound Museum pretends to teach does not tell the new generation of of the origin of the Philippine state in 1571, with the founding of Manila as the capital city (*cabeceral*) and the acceptance by the pre-Hispanic ethnic states (Tagalogs, Visayans, etc.) of the king of Spain as their natural sovereign, making them Spanish citizens and uniting them under the single concept of being Filipinos.

It does not tell Filipinos the importance of the Spanish *reducciones a pueblos,* which grouped the pre-Hispanic barangays into barrios that eventually formed the Filipino *municipio.* It does not tell Filipinos, that these *municipios* or *pueblos* introduced to our communities the idea of local administration, with *cabezas* or *tenientes del barrio* and *gobernadorcillos* or *alcaldes.* It does not tell Filipinos that every municipio became functional as a community because it had streets (*calle, kalsada*) and plazas dotted by some *bahay na bato* and clean nipa houses, a town hall (*cabildo* or *casa real*), a market palce (*palenque*), several stores (*tiendas*), elementary schools (*escuela parroquial*), a cemetery (*campo santo*), a doctor's clinic (*clinica*), a botica, a lawyer's office (*notario público*) and a usually grand stone church.

It does not tell Filipinos that these *municipios* were strung together by roads to form the different provinces and how these provinces make up the entire Philippine state, with Manila as its central seat of government.

It does not tell Filipinos how corn, *kamatis, sibuyas,* papaya, peanuts, tobacco, coffee, cacao and so many other plants enriched the Filipino diet and developed Filipino cuisine. It does not tell how working animals (*kabayo, kalabaw*) and tools like the *araro* and the *asarol* were brought from Mexico, Spain, China and Vietnam. It does not tell how the Filipino dress, the Filipino *muebles,* the Filipino fiestas, the Filipino songs and dances evolved from such *municipios, barrios* and *poblaciones* that had sprung from the original Spanish *reducciones a pueblo.*

It does not teach Filipinos that the language that united them for reform and revolution was Spanish. It does not tell Filipinos that their ancestors established the First republican form of government in Asia with Spanish as an official language, along with Tagalog, since even before the coming of the Thomasites in the 1900s there was already a University of Sto. Tomas and a functioning public school system.

It does end only with the execution of José Rizal because the murder right in Intramuros of the second president of the First Philippine Republic of 1898, Macario Sacay de Leon is a transcendal fact that is often deliberately excluded from the "history" taught to our children today.

—GUILLERMO GÓMEZ RIVERA,
Building C, Karrivin Plaza,
Pasong Tamo, Makati City.

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IPAHALIN ANG BAYANG PINAS
LINISIN !...
PATAYIN !...
ANG MGA KIDNAPPERS
KIWANIS CLUB

Beyond the objections to a national ID

THERE have been a lot of criticisms against the national ID program ranging from its repressive/fascistic intentions to intelligence gathering objectives. What is wrong in having an ID which proudly proclaims that one is a Filipino? The only ones who should be really worried are those with schizophrenic citizenship because they might pull out the wrong ID when asked what their nationality is or the pseudo Filipinos.

The data that the national ID supposedly seeks are already voluntarily given when one applies for a passport, seek credit or pay one's taxes. The intelligence information are already in the data bank of a lot of government agencies and private firms in the form of credit checking or prequalification documents required to be able to participate in government projects.

Let's look beyond the preconceived negative aspects and visualize positive benefits. We are now in the information age and whoever fails to take a ride in the information highway will be left behind, stuck in the quagmire of ignorance and retrogression.

Given the circumstances of an expanding population, heavy national debt and a very competitive international market, the Philippines, in order to survive as a country has very limited options. For example: The problem of terrorism which discourages foreign investment to the country must be minimized. The national ID will determine who are the Filipinos as distinguished from the pseudo Filipinos so as to pinpoint responsibilities and focus the resources to counter potential terroristic threats from the pseudo Filipinos.

To cut the costs of implementing the program, the passport and the ID's issued by the DFA, SSS, GSIS and Comelec should be accepted as legal substitutes to a national ID as a first stage. Only the citizens who are not in the computer program of the SSS, GSIS, Comelec and DFA should be required to acquire a national ID. The second stage should lead to the adoption of a Citizen's Information Card (CIC). If the national ID program could minimize terrorism and reduce graft over the long term, the project will prove "compelling national interest" as required by the Supreme Court.

Shall we take a ride on the information highway or merely longingly watch, stuck to our traditional, paranoid grounds, as our neighboring countries zoom past our divided, bickering nation?

—D.J. WENCESLAO JR.,
chair, Advocacy Committee,
Philippine Jaycee Senate,
2/F Jaycees Bldg.,
14 Don Alejandrino Roces Ave.,
Quezon City

The dog or the dog protector

WE denounce in the strongest terms the ongoing activities of Charles Wartenberg and his cohorts representing the International Wildlife Coalition-UK (IWC-UK), and some members of the Animal Kingdom Foundation (AKF).

Wartenberg has been operating in the Philippines and has passed himself off as someone devoted to animal welfare in his campaign to put a stop to the illegal dog meat trade (concentrated mainly in Baguio City and the Cordilleras). His actions, however, show otherwise.

We have reason to believe that Wartenberg and his cohorts are not sincere in their desire to help stop the illegal dog meat trade. The facts are as follows:

On June 27, 2002, staff members of The Junction newspaper filed a complaint for violation of the Animal Welfare Act (RA 8485) against Wartenberg, Luis Buenaflor, Winston Samaniego and Suzzane "Babes" Llaners (all staff members of the IWC-UK and AKF). A warrant of arrest was issued against Wartenberg, Buenaflor and Samaniego, and to date the case is being heard at the sala of Judge Danilo Camacho, Branch 1, Municipal Trial Court (MTC), Baguio City. Despite the case filed against Wartenberg and his staff, they continue to operate in Baguio City and Benguet Province (Cordilleras), now using the AKF. They still use the same methods, and hundreds of dogs recovered during their operations remain unaccounted for, as they were not turned over to the local authorities or to the court.

In the Oct. 4, 2003 issue of the INQUIRER, one of its front-page stories said that Wartenberg brought to the United Kingdom on Feb. 1, 2003 a dog (a mongrel) which was said to have been rescued during a raid at an illegal slaughter house in Baguio City. Verification with the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) Central Office in Quezon City showed that from June 21, 2002 up to Oct. 20, 2003 no export permit was issued for a mongrel dog to be transported to the United Kingdom, as required by law.

The INQUIRER report also said that the dog was transported via Lufthansa Airlines to the United Kingdom (Gatwick Airport, London) on Feb. 1, 2003. Verification with Lufthansa Airlines' Fred Posadas, of their customer service department, said there was no document on the transport of a mongrel dog to the UK on the dates claimed by Wartenberg. Furthermore, Posadas informed us that Lufthansa flights from the Philippines do not land at Gatwick Airport but at Heathrow Airport, London.

The above facts speak for themselves and should be ample warning.

—FREDDIE J. FARRES,
executive director,
Linis Gobyerno Inc., G/F PCEC Bldg.,
Happy Homes, Campo Sioco,
2600 Baguio City

Local representatives of Animal Kingdom Foundation informed me of the charges filed against them on the day the story was published.

Because AKFI is a young animal welfare organization here in the country, I did a background check on it and confirmed that AKFI exists. A source in Baguio also confirmed that this organization is operating to fight illegal dog meat trade in certain parts in the country. I checked out the International Wildlife Coalition Trust website and again found out that its existence cannot be doubted.

The story focused on the "dog," since his was an inspiring story. I wanted to be a bearer of good news about animals and humans. I believe that this is a better way to educate people on the importance of animal welfare. The story was about Sweet the dog. Based on the pictures and articles I obtained, I can say that the dog has found a better home, ironically, in a foreign land.

I stay away from the politics of animal welfare here and thought it better to help the helpless and voiceless animals by letting others know that there are humans who genuinely care for them.

Again, my story was about Sweet, not Charles Wartenberg.

—Marlet Salazar, PDI

The enigma in Ka Blas

IN THE COURSE of history, an event occurred in monarchical France. He was Honoré Mirabeau. He was practically insignificant until he was 40. Then he exploded and soared—as a writer, orator and revolutionary. Before, he was nothing; upon his death, he was a hero. Friends or foes, like Robespierre, venerated him. The French Constituent Assembly gave him a Pantheon!

It seems that Blas F. Ople was also insignificant during his early years. Later on he became a writer and orator. After hearing Ople speak at the Batasan, Carlos P. Romulo, then Secretary of Foreign Affairs, loudly remarked: "Ople puts to shame a college degree!"

Ople was perceived to be a nationalist up to the time of Marcos; then a pragmatist up to Ramos; and finally, as ultra rightist during Estrada and Macapagal-Arroyo.

Victor Hugo observed that Mirabeau had a timely death; had he lived longer, he would have been devoured by his own revolution.

Ka Blas, a former nationalist, championed the labor cause. He had his bright moments in international diplomacy. He died before the coming presidential elections, and got from GMA a hero's burial. History could tell whether he would be devoured by his passionate espousal of "globalization," "war on terror," the "new RP-US alliance," the VFA and other one-sided arrangements with the United States.

—NELSON D. LAVINA,
Ambassador (Ret.),
95 San Franciso St.,
Barrio Kapitolyo, Pasig City

Is execution a sin against God?

IF God commanded the Israelites to stone a man to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day (Num. 15:32-35), why is it that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines says that killing a convicted and confirmed kidnapper and drug lord is a sin against God?

The Chinese community is absolutely right to demand a deterrence against kidnapping through the lifting of the moratorium on capital punishment. As Rep. Harry Angping said, there is no better way for the government to say that it means business than by the prompt implementation of the death penalty. But "because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl. 8:11)

Indeed, the loud laughter of hardened criminals will always torment the ears of the victims and their loved ones if President Macapagal-Arroyo will heed the demonic advice of the CBCP not to lift the moratorium on the death penalty. Is God worried about the "human rights" of criminals? When Christ will come back to rule over the earth, He will "dash them in pieces" like a potter's vessel. (Ps. 2:9, Jer. 13:14, Rev. 2:27)

—RUBEN OLIVER ENSOY,
Timex, Fishermen's Village,
San Jose,
Tacloban City

Permanent total disability benefits merited

I AM a disabled SSS member. I suffered a spinal lumbar injury on Dec. 26, 1996. Since then I wasn't able to go back to work because my employer terminated my service effective Aug. 14, 1997. I was given a temporary total disability from Dec. 26, 1996 to June 17, 1997 (174 days); permanent partial disability, Sept. 11, 1998 to March 1999 (seven months). Since then I never had any work due to my disability.

According to the rules (Sec. 2 (b) Rule 7) of the Amended Rules on Employees Compensation and existing jurisprudence (Izola Aquino vs. Employees Compensation Commission, 201 SCRA 84) I am still entitled to Permanent Total Disability under PD 626, as amended.

According to the rules and jurisprudence, inability of an injured employee to engage any gainful occupation for a continuous period exceeding 120 days, entitles him to permanent total disability under PD 626, as amended. In my case, it has been six years since I have lost my job. I am asking the ECC through the publication of this request, to resolve my claim immediately.

—ALBERTO C. PARAGAS,
60 Alejandro St.,
Don Pepe Cojuangco Homes II,
Hacienda Lusitia,
San Miguel, Tarlac City

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Ordinary people doing extraordinary things

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

WHAT do you think of when you hear the word volunteer? Most probably students cleaning streets or planting *ipil-ipil.* Others will think of medical missions. Or of Peace Corps volunteers.

And your feelings about volunteer work? I suspect generally Filipinos are nonchalant. At best, "Oh, that's fine, but I don't have the time." Others will be more cynical, "Don't these people have anything better to do? They probably couldn't find a decent job." I know that even schools find the "required" volunteer programs, such as the community service substitute for ROTC, a burden.

It was Dr. Grace Aguiling Dalisay who reminded me that December is National Volunteer Month. Grace is with the psychology department at UP Diliman and has been coordinating a Social Science and Volunteerism program that has, among other tasks, been trying to link up different volunteer organizations nationwide through a network called Voice (Volunteers Organizations Information Coordination and Exchange Network).

Grace also gave me some ideas for this column, mainly the need to dispel misconceptions about volunteerism, which we should differentiate from "volunteer work" with all its connotations of school requirements.

Volunteerism is a philosophy, the idea that we should share time, knowledge and skills without financial considerations and on our own volition. It's not something new. We do this all the time within our families, like offering to baby-sit or to take care of a sick relative. Such offers of help are most appreciated when they're done spontaneously, from the heart, the Tagalog word "*kusa*" summarizing the spirit of this giving.

Some of us volunteer time for our communities as well, helping to coordinate different activities for our barangay or subdivision. This volunteer mutual help spirit is still strong in many rural areas, best captured by the notion of *bayanihan.*

Sometimes we go beyond our families and communities. With Rizal Day coming up tomorrow, we shouldn't forget that Rizal volunteered his time as well for community service during his exile in Dapitan.

Yet it is this kind of volunteer outreach work that often meets with opposition. I remember in my own youth, when I'd ask my parents for permission to go out for rural volunteer work, they'd grumble, "Charity begins at home. Why don't you clean up your room first?"

I persisted, and talked about the work and what I saw in the communities to clarify that volunteerism is not dole-out "charity work." Much of volunteerism today is oriented toward helping people to help themselves, mainly with education programs such as adult literacy, and with community development projects, from organic farming to utilizing rainwater.

Volunteerism becomes even more important as the country copes with many crises. My pitch for volunteerism is that it is an essential part of citizenship. We have no right to complain about government unless we volunteer to help change the situation by helping people to help themselves.

Volunteerism can transform people. One of Ces Drilon's talk shows recently featured guests from a range of groups doing volunteer work. Among them was a guest from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp., which supports their staff doing volunteer work. These corporations know that volunteer work makes for good public relations, but more importantly, it becomes part of human resource development.

I'd say my own summer volunteer stints back in college gave me many skills which I would never have picked up in the classroom. You learn to listen, realizing early enough that the people we're supposed to be helping already know what the solutions are, and just need to be heard. You learn to be observant, to tap whatever is available in resource-scarce situations. Some day I'll write about how our student volunteer team once operated on a carabao, without general anesthesia, without dextrose. (It lived many more years because of, or maybe in spite of, that amazing surgery.)

You learn patience and forbearance, to transcend the differences of language, ethnicity, class within a volunteer team and with the community. I was fortunate (and, I'd like to think, my students were, too) that I picked up my teaching skills during my volunteer stints. When you are able to explain something like tuberculosis (with all its complex variations, such as primary complex and drug-resistant strains) to adults who've reached only second or third grade, you're pretty much ready to tackle just about any teaching challenge.

In a nutshell, volunteerism teaches us that we don't have to be a Mother Teresa and Albert Schweitzer to make a difference. Volunteerism is, and I'm paraphrasing Ces Drilon, ordinary people learning they can do extraordinary things.

So, you may be thinking, go off and volunteer. Ah, but there's a catch here. Volunteers need support, too. You'll find most volunteers actually come from low- and middle-income backgrounds and need support for board and lodging, for transportation, for supplies. Rina Jimenez-David wrote about "remit cards" the other day, greeting cards that incorporate donations to volunteer organizations.

In 2004, you're going to hear more about volunteer organizations, and how you might pitch in. Meantime, I'm just going to ask that you have an open mind, be more supportive of your own kids when they go off to volunteer. Never mind their messy rooms. Mine still is, filled with exams and term papers to correct, books, clipped articles and notes with ideas for classes—and columns. I wouldn't be doing all this, and loving it, if it hadn't been for those volunteered summers and semestral breaks.

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Camp exec says FPJ rejected John Hay log cabin from Erap

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Actor Fernando Poe Jr., who has declared his intention to run for president in 2004, will need to exorcise his links to his bosom friend, former President Joseph Estrada. But a Baguio-based firm has at least exorcised one of the ghosts that has been haunting Poe.

An official of the Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevCo) revealed that the company actually gifted Poe a P40-million log home at the Voice of America (VOA) compound here, at the behest of Estrada.

But the source said Poe declined the offer, much like all other gifts Estrada tried to give him for campaigning for the former president's 1998 bid.

The source said Poe himself contacted CJHDevCo in 2000 when the INQUIRER report on Estrada's log homes was published.

"Yes, an offer was made to FPJ (Poe) but he had been distancing himself from Estrada when news surfaced that he had been relying on drinking buddies in his 'Midnight Cabinet' for policies that ran the country," the source said. "He (Poe) called us to tell us pointblank that the offer was being declined."

CJHDevCo officials originally denied gifting Estrada and his friends the log homes, when the INQUIRER first investigated the report in 2000.

In an interview on Wednesday, Benigno Cabrieto, CJHDevCo chief executive officer, said Poe's name does not appear on CJHDevCo records.

"Poe was never a buyer," Cabrieto said.

Log homes

CJHDevCo, the developer of the former American baseland, was drawn into a scandal in 2000 when his critics claimed that the firm had given Estrada its first log home, following government's release to the firm of a 31-hectare property formerly occupied by the VOA.

The so-called "Erap log cabin" sits on a hill that overlooks most of Camp John Hay's forests. It is a prototype for 25 log homes that would dot the former VOA compound.

In a 2001 report, Fil Estate chair Robert John Sobrepena said the firm had reduced the number of the proposed log homes to 12 to spare the trees that would be displaced by the project.

The INQUIRER had obtained a list in 2000 purportedly assigning the log homes to some of Estrada's closest friends and allies.

Poe was assigned the fourth log home next to the prototype, which was supposedly registered to Manta Equities Inc., a San Juan-based real estate firm owned by the family of banker Manuel Zamora, brother of then Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora.

The banker had also been implicated in the first INQUIRER report about an "Erap mansion" on Paterno Street when sources referred to a compound as Estrada's Baguio hideaway. The Paterno mansion is registered to Manuel Zamora, and was built by a firm owned by Jaime Dichaves, another Estrada friend.

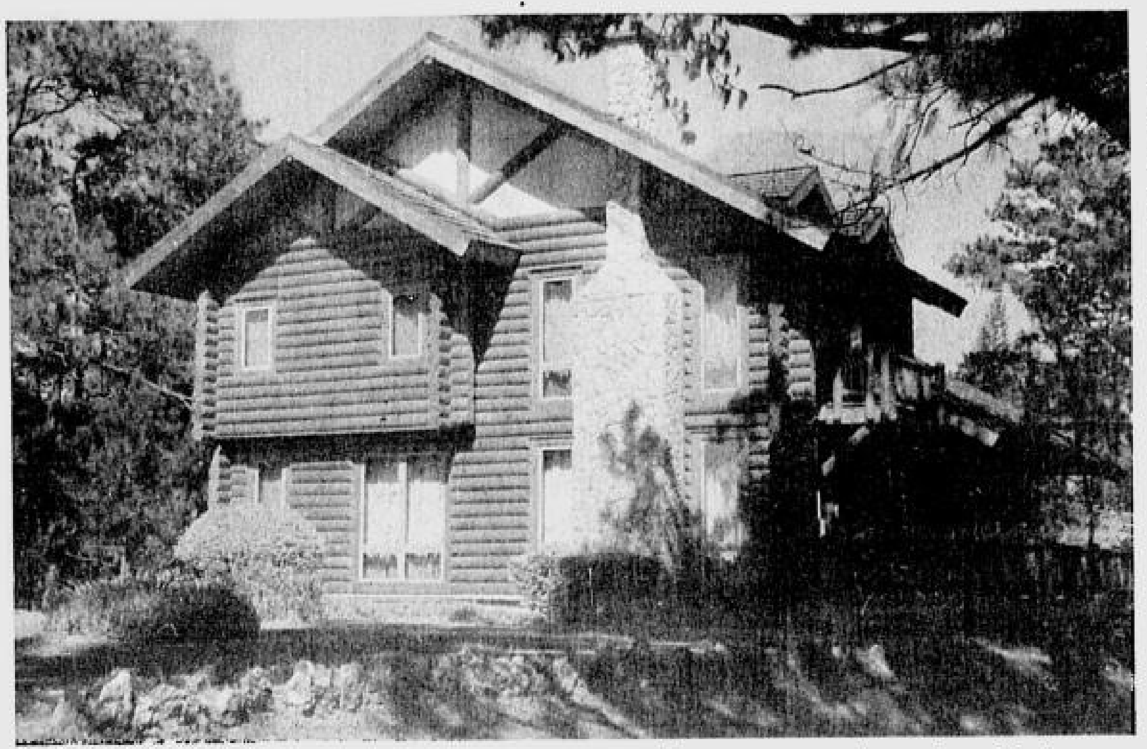
The list assigned seven cabins to Estrada's so-called business advisers: Dante Tan, William Gatchalian, Lucio Co, Enrique Razon, Jacinto Ng and Dichaves.

The list also identified Philippine Airlines chair Lucio Tan, Manuel Pangilinan, Frederick Dy, Wilson Sy, Manuel Tan, Ramon Ang, William Ocier and then Speaker Manuel Villar, among investors who were interested in purchasing or who have already reserved log homes.

An executive brief that was obtained from John Hay sources indicated that the cabins required a six-month reservation before they were built.

Lawyer Pablito Sanidad, counsel of whistleblower Luis "Chavit" Singson during Estrada's impeachment, described the log home project as Estrada's "crony village," in light of the controversy surrounding the former president's unexplained wealth.

But the National Bureau of Investigation, in 2001, had not obtained any tangible evidence that the project was tainted with corruption.



A LOG CABIN in Camp John Hay, the kind that is fit for presidents, top executives and presidents-would-be.

TOOTS SOBERANO

The INQUIRER source said lawyers who worked with Sen. Edgardo Angara for Estrada's presidential campaign in 1998 have witnessed how Poe graciously declined several gifts Estrada had offered him. Angara was Estrada's running mate in the 1998 elections.

The source also confirmed a popular anecdote on how Poe refused a Toyota Land Cruiser that Estrada had personally bought for him. Both Estrada and Angara wanted to show Poe their gratitude by showering him with gifts, according to one of Angara's former associates.

"Poe's secretary was already handed the keys to the Land Cruiser, which at the time was very expensive. But Poe called up his secretary, and a few minutes later, (the secretary) was returning the envelope containing the keys. (That episode) convinced me that (Poe) is a very honorable man," the source said.

Summer homes

With the scandal behind them, Cabrieto said the log home project had been "refined" in order to draw "more liberal terms" for buyers, although he did not elaborate.

"Few people really have that kind of cash (for each log home's P40-million price tag)," he said.

Except for the prototype, which is now being used as the CJHDevCo corporate cabin, the rest of the 12 log homes are on their finishing touches.

Cabrieto declined to identify the log home buyers, but he described them as "a combination of individual investors and corporate investors, because every firm wants a summer place."

"In fact, some of the log homes are being used right now," Cabrieto said. "(Despite the controversies), CJHDevCo can finally say it is a project well worth its cost."

Cops claim 'jueteng' gone in 2 regions

ILAGAN, Isabela—Police officials in Cagayan Valley and the Cordillera said jueteng operations in their areas have stopped this month due to a crackdown ordered by top Philippine National Police officials.

Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano, Cagayan Valley police director, said certifications from police directors in Isabela, Cagayan, Quirino and Nueva Vizcaya showed that illegal gambling activities have stopped in their areas.

Senior Supt. Nelson Nario, Isabela police director, said the nationwide campaign against illegal gambling has forced jueteng operators to stop their operations in the province's 35 towns and two cities since Dec. 21.

"It is completely dead since Dec. 21 and we hope to sustain our (anti-illegal gambling) operations," he said.

At least 125 jueteng employees, mostly bet collectors, were arrested from Jan. 1 to Dec. 29 this year in the province, he said. Nario said 43 cases were filed in courts and more than P61,000 in bet money were recovered.

Soriano said the police also stopped the plan of some jueteng operators to conduct "guerrilla-type" operations in Santiago City last week.

Orlando Olla, a jueteng bet collector in Barangay Alibagu here, said he was forced to join carolers in his area to earn money for his family when jueteng operations stopped 10 days ago.

Bishop Sergio Utleg of the Diocese of Ilagan and parish priests in the province said they are hoping that the stopping of jueteng will be sustained.

In Benguet, Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, Cordillera police director, also said his region has been cleared of jueteng operations.

"The Cordillera is now free from any form of illegal gambling, most especially jueteng," Albano said in a statement.

He said certifications submitted by police officials in the region showed that there were no jueteng operations in the Cordillera's 1,171 villages. He said representatives of non-government and religious organizations have affirmed the certifications. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Erratum

THE PHOTO that accompanied the story on Kido (Dec. 29, page A18) belongs to Patrick Mille Ortiz, who is the subject of another story in connection with the millennium babies. Above is the real Kido, who is appealing for help for a brain surgery. Our sincere apologies to the Ortiz and the Siapno families for the inadvertent error. ***PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Marcos bust takes piggy bank form

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

TUBA, Benguet—In this town, where the giant concrete bust of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos was blasted by suspected communist rebels exactly a year ago today (Dec. 29), is another bust of the former president.

But the bust is a lot smaller and utilitarian because it is actually a piggy bank crafted by sculptor Peter Pinder in Barangay Asin here.

"I made that bust, actually a piggy bank, because we all know that Marcos was 'piggy-bank minded,'" Pinder said, referring to accusations of corruption against Marcos. "It can also be used as a lamp base or a cookie jar," he added.

The Marcos piggy bank is made of plaster of Paris and among the unfinished works of Pinder. He said he started working on it in 1986 after Marcos was ousted through a civilian-backed military revolt.

He said he went to the site of Marcos' concrete bust in Barangay Taloy Sur and took photographs as residents celebrated Marcos' ouster around the structure in 1986.

He said he used the pictures to create a mold. But Pinder failed to finish the piggy bank as he was sidelined by other projects.

He said he wants to create more Marcos piggy banks and sell them.

Pinder, an Irish who settled here in 1977, said his piggy bank is not a political statement. "It's pure artistic work," he said.

He said when the bust was bombed, he felt sorry for the sculptors and artists who created it.

"After it was blasted, I said, '*Sayang* (What a waste).' The whole thing was such a waste because as a sculptor, I know how they built the whole thing. I'm speaking as an artist...," Pinder said.

PINDER with his unfinished work.

EV ESPIRITU

Special kids get chance to hear again after tests

CALAPAN CITY—After three series of tests given to 16 special pupils, 5 to 10 years old, from the M. Adriatico Sped (Special Education) Center here, medical specialists found that they can still benefit from hearing aid.

The 16 children underwent free hearing tests at the Center for Audiological Services of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila on Dec. 9.

The tests consisted of otoscopy, tympanometry and pure tone audiometry where the children's hearing threshold level at different frequencies was tested.

As a result, 14 were found to be profoundly deaf, while two others are moderately to severely deaf.

The special children's trip was in line with the Deaf Awareness Week from Dec. 3-9, which was previously observed nationwide on Nov. 9-15.

The pupils, 9 boys and 7 girls, were accompanied by their parents and three teachers and traveled on board a Supercat ferryboat.

The city government helped them with their transportation and meals during the training.

"We had to adjust to the schedule of UST and we also had been very busy in school," said teacher in charge Glenda Diala.

When Diala was taking her master's in Sped in another university, she had practicum in UST and was impressed with its facilities.

She asked if she could bring her pupils for a free hearing test and got a positive response.

"The only difference of our children with other children is the use of sign language in school. Otherwise, their mind is normal," said Diala, who considers her job to be fulfilling.

The children interact with regular students at the M. Adriatico Elementary School campus, she said.

Diala said anyone who wishes to help provide hearing to her pupils may get in touch with her at 0919-3881114.

Diala said the major causes of hearing disability among children is the mother contracting chicken pox at pregnancy and an overdose of medicines taken by children in their early years. *Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

A New Year's wish for a Bicolano child with tumor

By Joyce Mejillano
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

DARAGA, Albay—She may look like a normal child, but four-year-old Michaela Mae Marcaida of Barangay Bascaran in this town needs an operation to remove a big mass just beside her rectum.

"I really pity her. She cannot move around well. Maybe because it hurts," Mae, Michaela's mother told the INQUIRER.

Michaela is the first child of newlyweds Mae and Michael, both 23 years old.

The mass was already present when Michaela was born last Sept. 15, Mae said.

At first, she said, the mass was just as big as a tennis ball but as Michaela grew, it also became bigger and bigger and is now as big as Michaela's head.

A distorted nose-like feature can be seen in the glutted mass that makes it look like an underdeveloped head of a child.

"We suspect that she has a twin and their bodies are joined, only the other one did not develop," Mae said.

A document furnished by Dr. Xavier Cabredo, a surgeon at the Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital, said the baby has *sacrococcygeal teratoma* and recommends an excision.

Medical researches reveal that this kind of teratoma is the most common tumor of newborns, which occurs in one out of 35,000 to 40,000 live births.

The doctors told the couple that the operation might reach up to P100,000. They want to have their child operated in Manila since local hospitals don't have facilities for such operation.

They are now worrying about the big amount of money needed for the operation. Michael has no permanent job while Mae couldn't work due to the child's condition.

She said they still depend on their parents. They have approached some offices for help through the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office of Daraga (MSWDO) town.

But Emma Lindio, MSWDO head, said the money they have collected as of this time is not enough for the operation. The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office in Legazpi promised only P10,000.

They also approached some institutions but to no avail. Mae and Michael together with Michaela's grandparents are worried that the mass would grow larger as time goes by.

"I hope it would be removed soon. It's so hard to see her in that kind of condition especially that she's our first child. If only I could take her place," a teary-eyed mother told the INQUIRER.

"It's the gift that we pray we would receive this Christmas and I hope a kindhearted Santa would grant our request."

Those who wish to help Baby Michaela can contact PDI-Southern Luzon Bureau at telephone number (052) 820-1989 or (052) 820 8402.

Bosconian batch draws more plans

BATCH 1979 of Don Bosco Technical Institute (DBTI) continues to pursue its goal of helping out-of-school youths improve their lives through skills training.

The alumni's group—Alexander Coronel, Roderick Osai, David Pecson, Emmanuel Luis Panganiban, Jose Antonio Gimenez, Victor Pascual, Jose Rivas, Jonas Carl Perez and Ronald Aligada—are planning new projects, and would meet Jan. 4 next year in time with the golden anniversary of the DBTI.

Alumni who wish to take part in the preparations may call Victor Pascual, 552-0242 and 552-0058; Dave Pecson, 895-4023 and the Don Bosco Alumni Association, 894-5484.

Gov't panel head says peace talks to resume

ILAGAN, Isabela—Former Justice Secretary Silvestre Bello III, head of the government panel negotiating peace with communist rebels, remains hopeful that peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines would resume next year.

Bello issued the statement following reports that NDFP negotiators were not keen on resuming formal peace talks with the government.

Bello said the talks' resumption was boosted when five of six issues in the proposed draft of a joint statement between the Philippine government and the NDFP were approved.

He said the only issue being discussed now is the indemnification of at least 10,000 victims of human rights violations during the Marcos regime, he said.

"What we need here is an amending law to apportion P8 million out of the P680-million ill-gotten wealth that was originally intended to fund the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program of the government," Bello said.

Bello said they would talk with the 11-man NDF panel about the final peace agreement that both parties would endorse.

But clashes between government troops and communist rebels, however, continue despite Bello's optimism on the talks.

"We have to admit that conflicts are existing. We expect that. We will talk, to at least have another round of ceasefire (aside from the holiday ceasefire declared by both parties)," Bello said.

The government had declared a holiday ceasefire from Dec. 10, 2003 to Jan. 6, 2004, while the New People's Army, the Communist Party of the Philippines' armed wing, had set a ceasefire from Dec. 20, 2003 to Jan. 2, 2004. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

N'S FINEST 1
DILG
BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION
DAGUPAN CITY
TEL. Nos.
522-2772
515-9160

WARNING
A fire at the Univesity of Luzon in Dagupan City Dec. 16 may well serve as a warning to revelers during the New Year. Though the fire's cause was not firecracker explosion, its reddish orange glow provides a glimpse of the wrath that it could unleash especially during the celebration for the start of another year. RAY ZAMBRANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Pangasinan NPC members going GMA's way

URDANETA CITY—It looks like actor Fernando Poe Jr., who traces his roots to Pangasinan, could not expect to get votes from some of his *kabaleyan* (province mates) after top leaders of the province's fifth district pledged to support President Macapagal-Arroyo next year.

Binalonan Mayor Ramon Guico Jr., president of the League of Municipalities in the Philippines, said Pangasinan Rep. Mark Cojuangco, son of Nationalist People's Coalition chair Eduardo Cojuangco, and seven NPC mayors from his district have agreed to support Ms Macapagal in the 2004 presidential elections.

Of the nine mayors of the fifth district, only Guico, a distant cousin of the President, belongs to the administration Lakas-CMD. Sto. Tomas Mayor Antonio Villar Jr., on the other hand, ran and won as an independent candidate in 2001.

Urdaneta City Mayor Amado Perez Jr. confirmed that there was already a "coalition between the NPC and Lakas mayors," but said Cojuangco did not want to declare this publicly yet because he did not want to preempt his father's announcement.

"I do not know when he will make the announcement. (The coalition) is only a local arrangement," Perez said.

Cojuangco will run for reelection and on Tuesday filed his candidacy under the NPC.

But reports here said Lakas leaders from Pangasinan are preparing to give Cojuangco an official nomination from the Lakas party.

The elder Cojuangco was being asked to run for president but had begged off.

His support for a presidential candidate is much talked about now because there are signs that while his partymates and supporters are veering toward the camp of Ms Macapagal, there are also signs that the businessman was supporting the candidacy of Poe.

Cojuangco is now considered a big political factor because of his NPC. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Central Luzon police order ban on sale of firecrackers on highway

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—The top police official in Central Luzon has banned the sale of firecrackers and pyrotechnic products along the 90-km stretch of the North Luzon Expressway from Bulacan to Pampanga.

The ban that took effect on Monday was meant to prevent accidents and traffic jams along the highway, said Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, regional police director.

Vendors usually peddle their wares along the expressway's shoulder to attract the attention of motorists and travelers.

In Bulacan, Celso Cruz, president of the Philippine Pyrotechnic Manufacturers and Dealers Association Inc., said he lamented the lack of support from the Department of Health and other government agencies for their industry.

Cruz said the DOH should adopt their campaign "*ingat paputok, iwas disgrasya* (care in handling firecrackers to avoid accidents)" instead of pushing for its "*iwas paputok* (avoiding firecracker use)."

He said their campaign aims to promote safety and to sustain the local firecracker and pyrotechnic industry.

He also said he lamented that while their industry has been legalized, very few government agencies support firecracker manufacturers and dealers.

Cruz said they have experienced low sales in the past years because of the DOH campaign and the restriction of firecracker use to designated "firecracker zones."

"Despite all these, we in the industry kept fighting for our businesses to survive and despite the support of very few people from the government," Cruz said.

It's been a ritual every year of the government to campaign for a ban on the use of firecrackers, a campaign which usually fails to convince people to completely stay away from firecrackers.

In past New Year revelries, hundreds had been wounded and dozens killed as a result of the use of firecrackers.

Exploding firecrackers has been a tradition in the Philippines every New Year in the belief that doing so will drive away evil spirits and bring good luck for the coming year. *Tonette Orejas and Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

BI appointment seen key to Gloria's Pangasinan win

DAGUPAN CITY—Will President Macapagal-Arroyo get a solid vote from Pangasinan through the appointment of former Dagupan City Mayor Alipio Fernandez Jr. as the new Bureau of Immigration commissioner?

Yes, according to political leaders in vote-rich Pangasinan.

A possible rift within the administration Lakas CMD in Pangasinan, they said, has been avoided after the President announced Fernandez's appointment.

Fernandez, a 25-year veteran of local politics, was initially planning to run for mayor against incumbent Mayor Benjamin Lim, a fellow Lakas member.

A rift in the party, the leaders said, would affect the chances of Ms Macapagal in getting a solid, if not majority, vote in Pangasinan.

But Fernandez said he decided to abandon his plan to run for mayor and accepted the President's offer for him to head BI, replacing Commissioner Andrea Domingo who will run for mayor of the City of San Fernando in Pampanga next year.

Fernandez, currently the undersecretary for special concerns of the Department of Interior and Local Government, denied reports that a political trade-off came with his appointment.

"With or without the offer, we will support the President all the way," Fernandez told the INQUIRER.

Fernandez, who started his political career as the top councilor of the city in 1971, is the former president of Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines and the League of Cities of the Philippines.

Rafael Baraan, Lim's close aide, said a Fernandez-Lim battle for Dagupan mayor "will never happen."

"The national leadership of Lakas cannot afford a rift within the party," Baraan said.

He said Lakas' national leaders like Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and former President Fidel Ramos are natives of Pangasinan and will not allow Fernandez and Lim to engage in a political fight.

Baraan also denied reports that Lim was planning to run for representative of the fourth district against De Venecia.

"(Lim and De Venecia) have a very good working relationship. The Speaker supports the mayor. They have a perfect arrangement," Baraan said.

"Since (Fernandez) will not run for mayor, (Lim) does not have a strong contender. The President can (be assured of a) solid vote in Dagupan City," he added. *Gobleth Moulic, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Boy's death stirs superstitious beliefs

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The mysterious death of a boy in the Chico River has so baffled his parents and villagers that all they could point to for lack of answers were spirits they call *tinmungaw*.

The town of Sabangan was gripped by the tale of the tinmungaw which was blamed for the death of a high school freshman on Dec. 5.

The Philippine Information Agency here quoted the last words of the first year student from San Alfonso High School:

"Tinmungaws that inhabit the Chico River attacked and hit me with stones while others held my body and refused to release me."

The cause of death was undetermined.

But elders in Sabangan refused to identify the victim for fear of reprisal from the tinmungaws or *tinmengaos*.

The PIA reported that the victim refused to be hospitalized and even requested that his books be returned because "he was going on a journey to another planet."

He vowed to return as a grown man.

According to the PIA, the victim acted weirdly before his death. He wanted to take a bath early in the morning in the Chico River.

Because it was very cold, the victim's father accompanied him. After taking a dip, the victim, who was leading the way, was wobbling and following a circuitous route away from the footpath.

The victim later got sick and the town's diviners or *mansip-oks* were consulted.

Group says it's no tool of pols

A NON-GOVERNMENT organization denied accusations it was being used as a political tool of opponents of Bulacan Gov. Josefina de la Cruz.

In a statement, the group Movement for Responsible Enterprise (More) said the governor should simply face the issues hurled against her regarding possible fund misuse by the provincial government when it used as collateral for a classroom project loan funds that should be reserved for education subsidy.

"We assure Gov. De la Cruz that it is not only her province that is the subject of our investigation," said More leader Rey Junia.

"Caloocan City is one (case being investigated) for a bond float to finance a project. In Tacloban City, we are ready to file charges against the city government for another bond float," the statement said.

In Tacloban City, the group said it would mobilize protests during the public hearing for the bond float.

Bulacan, said the group's statement, is a special case because it acquired a loan using future collections for the Special Education Fund (SEF) to pay for the construction of several school buildings that will not earn to pay or service the loan.

The SEF, said the group, could not be used for purposes as collateral for other loans.

"It came as a surprise to us why Bulacan was able to get a loan using this fund as collateral," said the group.

Cops tape gun muzzles for New Year

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Philippine National Police in Negros Oriental has come up with a way to ensure that policemen do not indiscriminately fire their weapons during the New Year celebration: tape the muzzles shut.

Senior Supt. Amaron Morrok, the provincial police director, said police station commanders in the towns and cities of the province would be required to sign the taped muzzle of the policemen's service firearms to ensure that the weapon would not be fired unnecessarily during the New Year's revelry.

This move, he said, would ensure that the policemen would not violate the memorandum from higher headquarters on indiscriminate firing.

Morrok said the idea of taping the gun muzzles shut would not be unique to Negros Oriental as it would probably be implemented in all police stations throughout the country.

Morrok said that this would be the first time that the move is being resorted to by the PNP in its effort to ensure that policemen do not endanger lives.

Police remain on red alert throughout the country, even as the Dec. 26 anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines came and went without reports of violence in Negros Oriental.

Morrok, however, said he received information of sightings of about 25 communist guerillas in the mountains of Bais City. "The place is very far and it is very peaceful but we will not give [the communist guerillas] an inch. We are not letting our guard down," he said.

Meanwhile, police have advised the public against using powerful firecrackers during the New Year festivities. "We discourage them from using the big firecrackers because these may be mistaken for real explosives," Morrok said.

Morrok visited police stations throughout the province last week to test their preparations for the New Year festivities. *Alex V. Pal, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Witness in activists' slay escapes abductors

LUCENA CITY—One of the principal witnesses in the killings of two activists in Oriental Mindoro escaped abduction, according to Bayan Muna deputy secretary Roberto de Castro.

De Castro said suspects Aniano "Silver" Flores and Larry "Mike" Aparato, and several men with them tried to abduct Melvin Jocson Friday in Katarungan Village, Muntinlupa City.

The two were identified as the main suspects in the slaying in April of Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy, known activists in Southern Tagalog, said De Castro.

"Melvin was about to buy something from the store near their house when he saw the group. He positively identified Larry and Mike. He was very sure that it was the two," De Castro told the INQUIRER over the phone.

He said there was no other motive behind the presence of the group in the area except to abduct and eventually silence Jocson.

"Melvin is one of the key witnesses in the...double murder," he said.

Jocson was with Marcellana and Gumanoy when alleged members of the Army's 204th Infantry Battalion abducted them on April 21 in Oriental Mindoro.

Jocson and his six companions were eventually released the following day. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

PNP CHIEF Hermogenes Ebdane takes the Metro Rail Transit during an inspection as the nation observes the third year after the deadly Light Rail Transit bombing. EDWIN BACASMAS

People remember the bombing but not the fear

By Tarra Quismundo

IT WAS shortly before noon on Rizal Day in 2000. Light Rail Transit train 1037 was about to stop at the Blumentritt Station in Manila when a bomb went off.

Twelve persons died and 19 were injured.

The incident, however, has not detered 300,000 people from taking the LRT everyday between Baclaran in Pasay City and Monumento in Caloocan City.

One of them is Rhea Rapera, a 20-year-old employee at the Manila City Hall.

"I am not afraid of riding the train. I think it's even safer than taking the jeep, because there is a coach exclusively for women," said Rapera.

She related that even after the 2000 bombing, she continued riding the LRT.

Teacher Genelyn Improso, 26, said she had no fear of taking the LRT nor of the threat of a repeat of the Dec. 30 incident.

"*Masarap* (It feels good)," said a woman who took her first LRT ride with her baby and young son yesterday afternoon.

But the police is not taking any chances.

Strict security is being implemented at LRT and Metro Rail Transit stations. Bags are inspected, people frisked and trains are patrolled by bomb sniffing dogs.

But while fear had disappeared, justice sought by the victims has yet to seen.

The case of the LRT bombing has yet to reach trial proper two years after it was filed before the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 54 in January 2002.

Of the 11 accused of multiple murder, multiple frustrated murder and multiple attempted murder, Moklis Hadji Yunos, is the only one in custody.

He earlier confessed to planning the attack, but is now withdrawing his guilty plea, which he claims was done "under duress."

Because of this, the pre-trial was terminated and Yunos is up for re-arraignment. Prosecutor Peter Ong is now also seeking to have the case filed in a family court since 10 of the victims were minors.

Indonesian bomb expert Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi, who also confessed to the bombing, was killed in a military operation in North Cotabato on Oct. 12.

METROBRIEFS

Marikina raids fair

ORGANIZERS don't normally raid their own tiangges or flea markets; but again, Marikina has proven to be an exception. Members of the city's Waste Management Office confiscated last week goods of at least three vendors renting stalls at the city's Riverpark in Barangay Sta. Elena. The merchandise of Suwaib Amintao, Idris Bolug and Pani Aninto were hauled off after these were already stacked up outside their stalls, Mayor Marides Lourdes Fernando said. Vendors said they were forced to stack up more supplies, and eat up a portion of the pathway because the rent—about P1,500 on the average per day—was too steep. *Luige del Puerto*

Beware of gift-giver

THREE men bearing gifts turned out to be robbers Sunday in Malabon City. The men knocked on the gate of Leticia Santos, 70, in Barangay Ibaba, and claimed they were delivering a gift. When a maid opened the gate, the three announced a holdup. However, neighbors noticed what was happening and called the police. Two suspects, Orlando Lim, 36 and Paolo Buccat, 31, were arrested but their cohort managed to escape with P200,000 cash and P30.000 worth of jewelry. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

Party turns bloody

THE CHRISTMAS party of Shepherds of the Christian Fellowship Church in Greenfields, San Agustin, Novaliches, Quezon City, turned bloody Sunday after a group of drunken men attacked them at 7:30 p.m. Ysmael Gupit, an employee and resident of Bagong Silang, Caloocan City, was stabbed dead. Nathaniel, 35, Oliver, 37, and Jerson, 36, all surnamed Gupit, were wounded. One of the suspects, Luisito de Guzman, a pedicab driver and of Rolex Street, Interville, San Agustin, Novaliches, was arrested. The police said the suspects felt bad that they were not invited to the celebration. *Tina Santos.*

Detainee picks fight

ARNOLD Paular, 33, must have thought that his fellow detainees would not take him seriously. Paular, a detainee at the Central Police District Station 8 in Project 4, Quezon City, challenged other detainees to a fistfight and was promptly lynched. The following day, he was dead due to his injuries. Paular, of Acacia Street, New Manila, was detained for alleged car burglary. *Tina Santos*

Boy's body found

THE BODY of 2-year-old Jose Raymond Torres, of Ingreso Street, Binondo, Manila, was fished out of a creek in Binondo, Manila on Sunday. On Saturday afternoon, Torres was seen playing with a ball at the corner of Muelle dela Industria Street and Ingreso Street. He then disappeared. The police suspect Torres' ball could have rolled toward the river, and the 2-year-old fell in during his attempts to retrieve his ball. *Leila Salaverria*

MMDA blamed for clash

By Margaux Ortiz

AN MMDA enforcer stands guard along the Redemptorist Road in Baclaran to prevent vendors from again invading the thoroughfare. JESS YUSON

PARAÑAQUE City Mayor Joey Marquez yesterday blamed the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) for the violent clash between the agency's clearing operations team and illegal vendors in Baclaran Saturday night.

Marquez told the INQUIRER yesterday in a phone interview that the MMDA failed to coordinate last week's clearing operations with the local government.

"I think they (MMDA operatives) aggravated the situation," Marquez said.

"They don't treat the vendors humanely, which resulted in the retaliation," he added.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando, however, said otherwise.

"I don't see any action from the (Parañaque) city government to improve the situation in Baclaran," Fernando said in a press conference yesterday.

The chair said the vendors should not have been on the streets in the first place.

"The city officials should not give the illegal vendors hope that they have the right to stay on the streets and sidewalks," Fernando said.

The city council has passed an ordinance that allows local "entrepreneurs" to participate in a month-long agro-industrial fair in the Redemptorist area in Baclaran.

Fernando saw the fair as an excuse to allow the vendors to reclaim Baclaran's streets.

"I think Marquez is just being merciful with the vendors, but nothing good is coming out of it," Fernando said.

He stressed that it was the local government's responsibility to clear their streets and sidewalks of illegal vendors.

"Our job is only to assist them," Fernando said.

Marquez retorted that the MMDA did not know how to drive vendors away.

"The vendors could easily be asked to leave," Marquez said.

He added, "If the MMDA wants trouble, then they should go to Mindanao."

MMDA Clearing Operations Team head Bobby Esquivel said two operatives are now recuperating from the illegal vendors' attacks last Saturday.

He added that they have coordinated with the National Capital Region Police Office for 30 additional policemen during night operations.

Parañaque police chief Supt. Ronald Estilles said they were hunting three juvenile vendors who torched an MMDA outpost in Baclaran Saturday.

Yesterday, the men of Estilles arrested Ricardo Custodio, 36, of 137 Barangay Gumaoc, San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan.

Custodio was reportedly carrying a .25-cal. pistol while illegal vending in Baclaran.

Can you blame politicians for paying off NPA?

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo says she'll never pay the New People's Army "permit-to-campaign" fee that the guerrillas demand of all candidates for the 2004 elections.

The President can afford to say that because she's backed by the might of the Presidential Security Group (PSG).

But what about politicians who have few or no bodyguards at all? It would be crazy for these politicians not to pay off the NPAs when they campaign in their territories. Their bodyguards are no match for the NPAs.

* * *

Let's face it: There are many remote areas controlled by the NPAs. Those areas are visited by elected officials or candidates for elective office only during the campaign period. The rest of the year, they're neglected.

And because of government neglect, people in those areas have become sympathetic toward the communist rebels. When the military sends patrols to those areas, they're ambushed because the barrio folks tip off the rebels about their presence.

* * *

Because NPAs hold sway in many areas and the military can't penetrate them without being ambushed, there seems to be a state of belligerency in the country.

In a state of belligerency, there is a stalemate between the rebels and the government. Each respects the other's territory.

If the military denies such a condition exists, then why are rebels allowed to roam in many areas without being challenged? Why can't government troops chase after the rebels relentlessly?

* * *

Ambuscades of military convoys and patrols can be prevented if the rebels are always on the run.

Since government troops greatly outnumber the NPA rebels, they should not stop chasing them in the jungle. When government troops chasing after rebels get tired, they can be replaced by fresh troops who will continue the pursuit.

But the key to the success of the chase are the rural folk. The government should make the rural folk feel important by making its presence felt among them. Such presence could be in the form of free education and medicines given by government doctors.

* * *

The military seems to ignore the value of intelligence in fighting insurgency. Making intelligence agents live among the rural folk cannot be overemphasized.

If it's not possible to "plant" intelligence agents in NPA-held territories, then the military can make use of some barrio people who will tell on the movements or activities of the guerrillas. Money is needed to pay spies among the locals.

But alas and alack! Military and police commanders don't spend their intelligence funds for their intended purpose. Intelligence money, which is not subject to audit, ends up in the pockets of some military and police commanders.

* * *

A soldier who was "planted" in a remote coastal town in Luzon by his unit pretended to be a buyer of fish.

After a while, he had to be pulled out because he could no longer sustain his cover. The money he used to buy fish from small fishermen did not arrive in time.

The bigwigs in his brigade were using the intelligence funds for other purposes.

Miko Sotto dies in condo fall

From page A16

"He had no pulse," said Dr. George Cheng, senior house officer in the government hospital. "He wasn't breathing. There was no sign he was alive when he was brought here."

Security-in-charge Sarlando Salvani, 35, told the police that Sotto, his cousin Oyo Boy, and production designer Medina had climbed the railings between the 8th and 9th floor of the condominium at 4:30 a.m. yesterday.

Salvani said Sotto and Oyo Boy then hopped into the plant box, but Medina stayed behind.

The three appeared to be just talking and killing time, he added.

Concerned about the safety of the boys, Salvani called roving guard Glenn Peroy to tell them to clear the area.

"(Peroy) had barely made ten steps when I heard a loud thud," Salvani said. "I asked the guard to see what it was. It was Miko. He fell."

Cheng said Sotto's ears were bleeding when he was brought to the hospital—a sign that his skull was fractured.

Dr. Alexander Vuelta, the attending physician, said he noticed a linear abrasion in Sotto's neck.

Sotto could have hit a wire or a rope as he fell, the doctor said.

Oyo Boy and their two other companions brought Sotto to the hospital.

Cheng said Oyo Boy talked to his father, Vic, over the phone. Upon the older Sotto's advice, Oyo Boy took his cousin to the Makati Medical Center, Cheng said.

Police inspected Sotto's flat and the plant box from where he had fallen. They found no bottle of alcoholic drinks.

The actor's body was brought to the hospital morgue at 8:05 a.m. and was later taken to the Arlington Memorial Chapels on Araneta Avenue three hours later. But the body was transferred later to the Sanctuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park Makati.

Ma's Xmas wish for her sick son

THIS Christmas, a mother makes a wish only strangers can grant.

Magdalena Reyes' eldest son, Ed Ryan, is afflicted with chronic renal failure to chronic glomemlonephritis. His doctors say Ed Ryan should undergo dialysis once a week to survive.

Now, Magdalena is worried because aside from the money needed for the weekly dialysis, her son's hospitalization bills have reached P50,300.

Her only wish now is that they be able to produce the amount needed to pay for Ed Ryan's hospitalization and for the weekly dialysis.

Good-hearted individuals who would like to help Magdalena can get in touch with Julito Reyes at 0918-5684224. Donations can also be sent to his account no. 2391-0726-74 at the Land Bank of the Philippines, Binangonan Branch. *Jocelyn Uy*

Elderly in jail...

From page A16

president a petition letter about it."

When she was still senator, Ms Macapagal-Arroyo proposed the Indeterminate Sentence Law, which sought to decongest prisons by making those who have served a minimum of ten years of their sentence eligible for parole.

The bill did not pass, and is now gathering dust at the Senate.

A few more years

According to Ruelo, hopes were high when Ms Macapagal became president.

"After all, she is a woman, and she proposed a bill particularly intended for the inmates here," the director said. "She can do that now that she is president. We pray she can grant the old women here clemency."

On Dec. 23, Elorde and her group distributed Christmas gifts to the old inmates. They then held a prayer rally.

Touched by the gesture, many inmates wept at the kindness shown to them.

"My Christmas wish is for God to grant me and the other old women here freedom, and to give us a few more years with which we could spend with our children," Lola Asuncion said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 30, 2003
6th Day After Christmas

1st Reading: 1 Jn 2:12-17
Gospel: Lk 2:36-40

There was also a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. After leaving her father's home, she had been seven years with her husband, and since then she had been continually about the Temple, serving God as a widow night and day in fasting and prayer. She was now 84. Coming up at that time, she gave praise to God and spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When the parents had fulfilled all that was required by the law of the Lord, they returned to their town, Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew in stature and strength and was filled with wisdom: the grace of God was upon him.

Commentary

After the modest marvels involving Simeon and Anna in the temple, Joseph and Mary return with the child to Nazareth. "The child grew to maturity." With this concise description, years of silence, of unreported ordinariness and unrecorded growth ensue. The apocryphal gospels tell stories of miracles performed by the child Jesus, but in the canonical gospels, there is nothing but an allusion to his growth in wisdom and grace. Perhaps nothing of Jesus' childhood is recorded precisely because it was so common. Perhaps that is the point: God's accompaniment of us in our ordinary, lackluster days. After all, it is such days that make up most of our lives. In Jesus, God is lovingly near to us in the commonplaceness of home, family, work and daily routines. Perhaps we are invited to appreciate more deeply the mysteries of everydayness that Jesus shared with us.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

LABOR LAW (TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT)/CRIMINAL LAW—An employee of a company or corporation engaged in illegal recruitment may be held liable as principal, together with his employer, if it is shown that he actively and consciously participated in illegal recruitment. Settled is the rule that the existence of the corporate entity does not shield from prosecution the corporate agent who knowingly and intentionally causes the corporation to commit a crime. The corporation obviously acts, and can act, only by and through its human agents, and it is their conduct which the law must deter. The employee or agent of a corporation engaged in unlawful business naturally aids and abets in the carrying on of such business and will be prosecuted as principal if, with knowledge of the business, its purpose and effect, he consciously contributes his efforts to its conduct and promotion, however slight his contribution may be. The law of agency, as applied in civil cases, has no application in criminal cases, and no man can escape punishment when he participates in the commission of a crime upon the ground that he simply acted as an agent of any party. The culpability of the employee therefore hinges on his knowledge of the offense and his active participation in its commission. Where it is shown that the employee was merely acting under the direction of his superiors and was unaware that his acts constituted a crime, he may not be held criminally liable for an act done for and in behalf of his employer [Citations omitted.] [Justice Ynares-Santiago, First Division, People vs Corpuz, G. R. No. 148198, October 1, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA

FOUR DIGIT
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(In exact order)
SUERTRES
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MEGALOTTO 6/45
2 12 18 25 30 33

METRO

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Abelardo S. Ulanday**

WPD: Chinese women arrested, not abducted

By Leila Salaverria and Gil Cabacungan

THE TWO Chinese women who had earlier been reported abducted in Muntinlupa City were in fact arrested and taken into custody, according to Western Police District officials.

The women—Yang Jian Ping and Wong Man Wa—were accused of supplying drugs to inmates at the New Bilibid Prison, said Supt. Marcelino Pedrozo, head of the WPD anti-illegal drugs unit.

Yang, a native of In-an, China and resident of Magdaong Drive in Muntinlupa is six months pregnant at the time of her arrest.

Wong, a native of Hong Kong, holds Chinese and British passports.

Police seized 87.6 grams of shabu with a street value of P175,200 from the two women.

Pedrozo said the women were arrested on Dec. 26 in Muntinlupa, shortly after they visited their husbands at the NBP's maximum security compound.

Yang's husband, Luk Wai, and Wong's husband, Cheung Saiwaii, are serving double life terms for drug offenses.

Pedrozo said the two arrested women are members of the 14K drug ring.

He said Yang had taken over her husband's business after the man was arrested and imprisoned.

Yang also acted as a courier of illegal drugs that were sold to inmates at the NBP, according to the head of the WPD drug unit.

Pedrozo said the WPD had coordinated with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the Southern Police District before launching the operation.

Pedrozo clarified that contrary to reports, the two women were arrested in a legitimate police operation, not abducted as was previously reported.

He said that the incident was probably reported as an abduction because the Muntinlupa police initially did not receive the report about the WPD's operation.

The reported abduction caught the attention of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who had ordered the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force to look into the matter.

Ms Macapagal also noted that "the victims' husbands were involved in the illegal drug trade."

MIKO Sotto

Miko Sotto dies in condo fall

By Marinel Cruz, Luige del Puerto and Margaux Ortiz

THE FAMILY of actor Miko Sotto, who died after falling off from the 9th floor of a high-rise condominium where he lived, yesterday donated his eyes to the Eye Bank, a transplant coordinator said.

Transplant coordinator Marilyn Genares said Miko's mother, actress and radio commentator Ali Sotto, called the Sta. Lucia International Eye Bank of Manila a few hours after doctors of the Makati Medical Center pronounced her son dead.

Sotto was 21.

Eye bank technicians Roberto Manuntag and Eric Belarga performed the excision of Sotto's eyes at 7 a.m. yesterday, Genares told the INQUIRER.

Sotto's father, Maru Sotto, who lives in Baguio City, arrived at the hospital about 10 a.m. yesterday.

The young actor did not have a pre-death eye donor identification card, Genares said.

The younger Sotto was with his cousin, actor Oyo Boy Sotto, son of actor and television host Vic Sotto by actress Dina Bonnevie, and GMA 7 production designer Marko Medina, when the actor fell off the 9th floor of the San Francisco Gardens Condominium in Mandaluyong City, where he lived for more than three years. Another cousin, who is not from show biz, was with them.

Mandaluyong police have also ruled out foul play and suicide in the death of Sotto, nephew of Sen. Tito Sotto.

The actor was declared dead on arrival at the Mandaluyong City Medical Center at 4:50 a.m. yesterday.

"It was an accident," said Senior Supt. Ericson Velasquez, city police chief. "He most likely slipped and fell."

Doctors tried to revive Sotto, but gave up after 15 minutes.

MIKO/ A15

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LOLA Asuncion, 72, hopes to live just long enough to go back home and be with her family. She is serving a 20-year prison term at the women's correctional facility in Mandaluyong City. ERIK ARAZAS

Elderly in jail just waiting for time to die

By Luige del Puerto

"I SPEND my time knitting and sleeping… I'm just waiting for the time to die."

Lola Asuncion, a frail, white-haired woman of 72, should have been enjoying the twilight of her years in the company of her family.

Instead, she has been languishing in jail for the last seven years.

"I don't want to look back at the time they arrested me because, a few days after that, my husband died," Lola Asuncion said in Filipino.

"In here, when you have nothing to do but wait, the memory returns every so often, and that hurts."

Life behind bars

Lola Asuncion is in jail for drug pushing—convicted and sentenced to at least 20 years imprisonment.

She has spent three of the last seven years at the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City.

"Money is hard here," Lola Asuncion said of her life behind bars. "It's good there are students who come and visit us. They bring soap and toothpaste."

Lola Asuncion longs to be with her family.

It's up to God

"It's all up to God now," said Lola Asuncion, who was arrested for selling drugs in Olongapo City.

In truth, it is also up to President Macapagal-Arroyo, who has the power to grant executive clemency.

But the President has only pardoned two women from the institute during the last two years, according to lawyer Rachel Ruelo, prison director.

Lola Asuncion is one of more than 50 women over the age of 60 who are doing time at the institution.

Their cases range from estafa to violation of the anti-illegal drugs law.

No danger to society

Ruelo and members of the Inner Wheel Club of the Philippines—an organization comprising the wives of Rotary Club members—believe the elderly inmates should be freed.

"At their age, they pose no danger to society," Ruelo said. "Why do inmates from the National Bilibid Prison get presidential pardon more often than the women here?"

Ruelo said that sometime in July, volunteers working on First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo's free legal aid program had promised to extend assistance to the ailing inmates.

Nothing happened out of it, the prison director lamented.

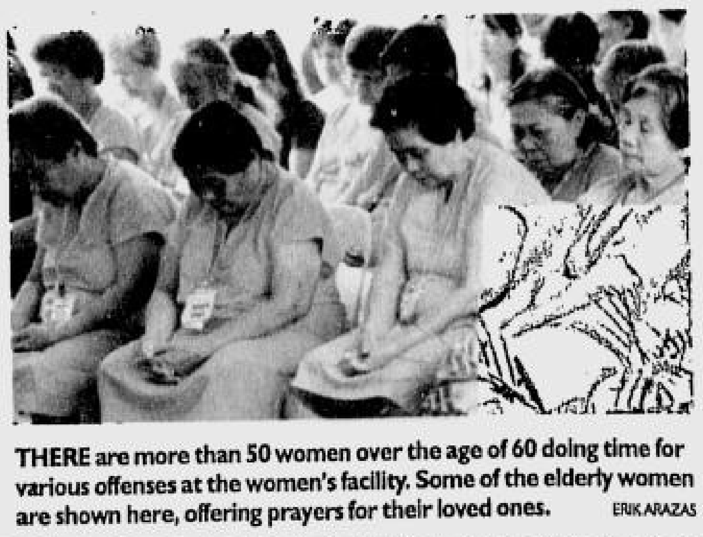
'Laya ka na Lola'

Ruelo's views are shared by Liza V. Elorde, president of the Inner Wheel Club's Parañaque/Sucat chapter.

The group is spearheading a campaign, dubbed "Laya ka na Lola," to help the elderly inmates adapt to life outside prison.

"We want the Department of Justice to review (the inmates') cases," Elorde said. "They should be allowed to go back to their families. We will write the

ELDERLY/ A15



THERE are more than 50 women over the age of 60 doing time for various offenses at the women's facility. Some of the elderly women are shown here, offering prayers for their loved ones. ERIK ARAZAS

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Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**
Assistant Editor **Edwin M. Villanueva**

SPORTS TV
Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA-Hornets vs Pistons; 8:30 a.m. (8 p.m.); Solar Sports—New Orleans visits the Motor City.

NBA Greatest Game-Lakers vs Kings, Game 5, 2002 Western Semifinals; 12 noon; Solar Sports—It seems that Sacramento has this game wrapped up. But fortunately for LA, super-clutch playoff performer Robert Horry is up to his old tricks again. With the clock running down, the ball finds its way to Horry just behind the 3-point line at the top of the key. He drains it, demoralizing the Kings.

Red Bull ships Miller to Talk 'N Text

By June Navarro

WILLIE Miller, the 2002 Most Valuable Player, will bring his crowd-drawing slasher moves to Talk 'N Text next season.

The Red Bull Barako Thunder yesterday shipped the 5-foot-10 Miller to the Phone Pals in exchange for a future pick and two players of the Barako's choice except for 2003 MVP Asi Taulava and Rookie of the Year Jimmy Alapag.

Red Bull's decision came after Talk 'N Text had dangled a trade offer for the spectacular off-guard, who was said to be looking for a juicier concession other than what the Barakos had proposed.

A source said Miller's agent, Molet Pineda, opted to test the value of his ward in the free-agent market rather than immediately sign the three-year, maximum contract with Red Bull worth P12.6 million.

Exclusive of perks and bonuses, the same source said Red Bull was dead-set on paying Miller the maximum monthly wage of P350,000.

"We let go of him (Miller) with a heavy heart. We decided to trade him thinking it would serve both parties better in the end," said Red Bull team manager Tony Chua.

"It seems Willie might no longer be happy playing with us. We appreciate everything that he did for us. We won two championships with him and we only hope the best for him," Chua added.

In Miller's last game with Red Bull, he scored only two points as the Phone Pals eliminated the Barakos in their sudden-death semifinal playoff in the Reinforced Conference.

In another development, the PBA has appointed a new television partner for next year but declined to announce the winning outfit until the end of the year.

"A consensus has been reached but there is still some additional matters that the board wants to discuss with the proponent," said PBA Commissioner Noli Eala.

ABC-5 seems to be the top choice followed by Jemah Television and Solar Sports, which made a last-minute pitch during yesterday's PBA board meeting.

Meanwhile, the biggest names in the amateur ranks, including the rookie pool's Big 3, beat yesterday's deadline for the 2004 PBA Annual Rookie Draft set at the Glorietta Activity Center on Jan. 16.

Ranidel De Ocampo, Ervin Sotto and Marc Pingris—tall, big and

RED/A18

MILLER

TAÑAMOR PDI PHOTO

Tañamor top amateur pug once again

AMATEUR boxing, long the country's source of pride, thrived on the golden fists of one man in the year about to end.

His name is Harry Tañamor.

The 25-year-old pride of Zamboanga City easily stamped his mark from the Indian provinces of Goa and Hyderabad to the city of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, winning one gold medal in each place.

Small wonder then that when the country's oldest media organization, the Philippine Sportswriters' Association (PSA), handed out its verdict for the year's top amateur boxer, Tañamor emerged as its hands-down choice for the second straight time.

On Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavilion, Tañamor joins a select crop of honorees led by co-athletes of the year boxing champion Manny Pacquiao and bowling hero Christian Jan (CJ) Suarez who will be feted by the entire sportswriting fraternity for their respective achievements that made 2003 a truly memorable one.

Indeed, it was a tremendous year for Tañamor.

His golden campaign took off with a victory in the 1st Goa International Boxing Championships in India. He followed it up by winning the country's lone gold in the inaugural staging of the Afro-Asian Games, before pulling off another triumphant stint in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games to avert a gold medal shutout for the Filipino pugs.

That Tañamor shone bright in the sport was really nothing new, having done the same feat a year ago during the Busan Asian Games when he bagged a silver medal for boxing's best finish in the quadrennial meet.

No less than President Macapagal Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo will be around to honor Tañamor and other awardees during the two-hour rites sponsored by Red Bull and Agfa Colors, with support from the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), Mayor Lito Atienza, San Miguel Corp., and the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA).

Aside from Tañamor, the other major awardees are Dorothy Delasin, women's golf; Wind Blown, horse of the year; Mark Paragua, chess; Arnel Quirimit, pro cycling; Pat Dilema, jockey of the year; Asi Taulava, pro basketball and James Yap, amateur basketball.

NBN-4 will televise the Awards Night.

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NBA scouts coming; exchange program okayed

By Dennis U. Eroa

THE NBA scouts are coming to town. And they aren't just going to watch the scenery.

In a landmark agreement, the Philippine Basketball League and the National Basketball Development League agreed on an exchange program that could lead to the probable entry of Filipino cagers to the world's premier basketball tournament.

"The PBL-NBDL tie-up is the first in the world. Certainly, the PBL is honored to be given this opportunity," PBL Commissioner Chino Trinidad yesterday told the INQUIRER.

Trinidad, external vice president Peter Chanliong and Ralph Roy, vice-president of Solar Sports, recently met with representatives of the NBDL to finalize the agreement.

"Mr. Chanliong and Roy actually made the tie-up possible," said Trinidad. The ongoing PBL Platinum Cup is being televised on Solar Sports.

If plans don't miscarry, Trinidad said the scouts will arrive as early as January to watch the finals of the Platinum Cup or during the next conference.

"A minimum of two and a maximum of four PBL dribblers will then be selected to join NBDL camps scattered across the US," Trinidad said. "They will pit their skills against aspiring cagers from all over the world and knock at the NBA doors."

Board chair Dioceldo Sy said the NBDL entry augurs well for the PBL.

"No doubt about it, this is welcome news for the PBL. This reinforces the role of the PBL as an avenue for young cagers to achieve big-time," said Sy.

Aside from providing the PBA with future superstars, the PBL gives collegiate cagers the exposure needed to excel in the pro league.

Joining the NBA has long been a dream for the basketball-crazy Pinoys.

Cebuano spitfire Romulo Marata made the country proud when he briefly saw action in an international basketball league based in Vancouver for 6-foot-3 and below cagers during the early '90s.

Another playmaker, Johnny Abarrientos, still actively playing in the PBA, was once hyped as an NBA material.

Lately, Red Bull's Willie Miller and Alaska's Mike Cortez were also billed as possible NBA camp attendees.

"But nothing concrete has really come out regarding the fulfillment of the NBA dream," Trinidad noted.

TRINIDAD

LA Lakers, Kings begin new year with best records

NEW YORK—The Los Angeles Lakers and Sacramento Kings will begin the new year with the NBA's best records after finishing 2003 with victories.

Shaquille O'Neal had 22 points and 16 rebounds, and six of his teammates scored in double figures Sunday night in the Lakers' 105-82 victory over the Boston Celtics.

The Lakers (21-7) snapped a two-game losing streak in winning for only the third time in seven games following a 10-game winning streak.

Sacramento (20-7) also snapped a two-game losing streak by defeating Utah, 98-89. Peja Stojakovic scored 20 of his 37 points in the fourth quarter, finishing 10-of-22 from the field and 13-of-14 on freethrows.

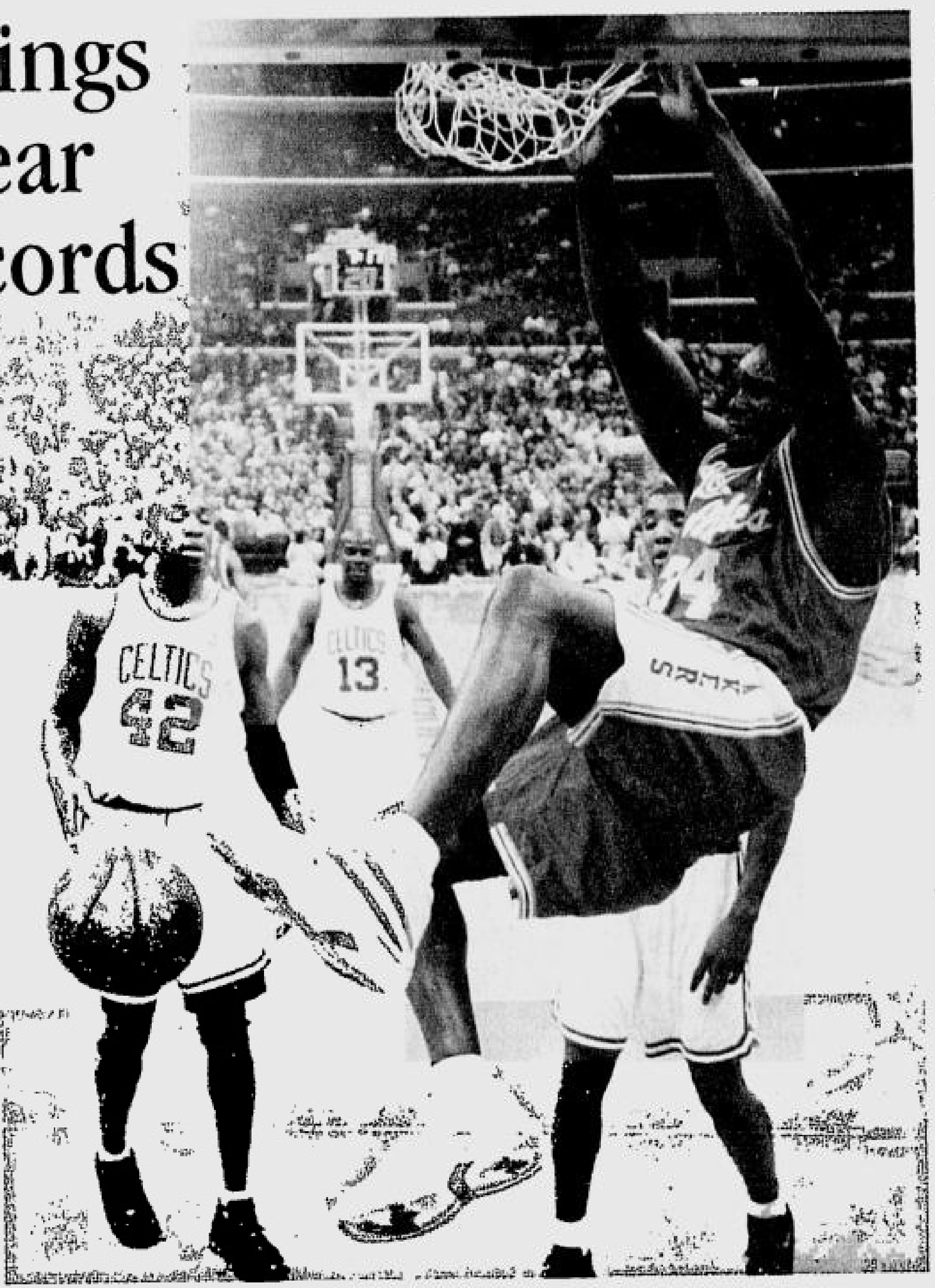
The Lakers won't play again until Friday against Seattle, while the Kings are off until a Saturday matchup with the Clippers.

Both teams were happy to go into those long stretches of downtime with victories.

"You have poor stretches during the season, its natural," Kings coach Rick Adelman said. "We lose to Dallas, lose to Golden State and struggle against Utah. But you have to fight through games like these."

Derek Fisher scored 15 points, Devean George added 14, Gary Payton had 13, and Kobe Bryant scored 11 while shooting 5-of-18 for the Lakers, who outrebounded the Celtics, 55-35.

O'Neal scored the first seven points of the third quarter to give Los Angeles a 64-49 lead. The Celtics drew within eight points before the Lakers outscored them 9-2 to finish the period, making it 79-64. *AP*



O'NEAL goes for a slam dunk as Boston's Vin Baker looks helplessly. AP

San Antonio tallies 13th straight win

SAN ANTONIO—Manu Ginobili scored 25 points to lead the San Antonio Spurs to their 13th consecutive victory, 89-74, over the Milwaukee Bucks in National Basketball Association play on Sunday.

The Bucks had their three-game winning streak snapped as the Spurs held them to a season-low points total.

Milwaukee didn't score a point for nearly six minutes after closing to within 66-63 early in the fourth quarter.

Tim Duncan scored 12 points and hauled down 15 rebounds for the Spurs, but he did miss six straight freethrows at one point.

That blip was not enough to slow down the Spurs, however, as they continued the longest winning streak in the NBA this season.

Hedo Turkoglu also had 12 points for the Spurs along with a season-high 12 rebounds.

Tony Parker added 12 points for San Antonio, which led by 16 points at the half before pulling away again with a 14-0 run in the fourth quarter.

Michael Redd scored 22 points to lead Milwaukee, while Tim Thomas had 13.

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 32 points and had 10 rebounds and nine assists to lead the Cavaliers past the Portland Trail Blazers, 86-74.

The Cavaliers won their 10th game of the season.

Cleveland did not hit double-figures in wins last season until Feb. 5.

Zach Randolph scored 20 points and Rasheed Wallace added 17 for the Trail Blazers, the only NBA team without a win on the road this season (0-10).

In Los Angeles, Jalen Rose scored 23 points to lead the Toronto Raptors to a 94-88 win over the Clippers.

Vince Carter added 22 points for Toronto (15-14), which snapped an 18-game road losing streak against Western Conference opponents. Donyell Marshall added 19 points and nine rebounds.

Quentin Richardson had 16 points and 13 rebounds for the Clippers, while Elton Brand had 14 points and 13 rebounds.

In Phoenix, Shawn Marion scored 26 points to lead the Suns to a 100-92 win over the Philadelphia 76ers, snapping a three-game losing streak.

Joe Johnson added 23 points for the Suns, who have won just three of their last 13 games.

Glenn Robinson scored 23 points and added nine rebounds for the Sixers, who are still without the injured Allen Iverson.

In Oakland, Marcus Camby had 17 points to lead seven players in double-figures as the Denver Nuggets beat the Golden State Warriors, 103-79.

Earl Boykins added 13 points and 13 assists for Denver. *Reuters*

Complete results:

Toronto 94, LA Clippers 88; Sacramento 98, Utah 89; Cleveland 86, Portland 74; San Antonio 89, Milwaukee 74; Phoenix 100, Philadelphia 92; Denver 103, Golden State 79; LA Lakers 105, Boston 82.

Red Bull ships Miller to Talk 'N Text

From page A17

talented—are expected to be prime pro prospects along with their Philippine teammates James Yap, Rich Alvarez, Gary David and Wesley Gonzales.

The seven nationals distinguished themselves in the RP five that retained its title in the Vietnam SEA Games recently.

But Shell, which will pick first, might tap Joachim Gunter Thoss, a 6-foot-7, Filipino-Australian pivotman who impressed some of the scouts in the Philippine Basketball League.

Thoss, who played for ICTSI-La Salle in the PBL, is one of only two Fil-foreign players in the Draft, the other being Fil-Aussie Richard Peter Benitez Michael, a 6-foot-2 University of Sydney alum.

Other prospects who caught the final bus to the rookie raffle were PBL cagers Tristan Codamon, Lou Gatumbato, Eric Dela Cuesta, Jay-Arr Estrada, Steve Marucot, Cesar Catli and Warren Ybanez, bringing to 49 the number of aspirants.

UST's Niño Gelig, Francis Mercado (San Beda) and Jam Alfad (San Sebastian) also submitted their application at the last minute.

A slew of seldom-exposed inside operators also tried their luck.

They are San Beda's Julius Binuya (6-foot-5), John Flores of St. Francis (6-4). Nicolas Fasano (6-3), Christopher Guerrero (6-3) and Joel Lagare (6-3).

For governor?

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

LAWYER Sammy Estimo of Ilokoslovakia texted this to me on Sunday: "*Ania nga talaga ti planom, Apo*? Gov, Cong, Pres or Press *met laeng? Bitin kami!*" Translation: "What is really your plan, my Lord? Run for governor, congressman or president? Or will you remain a journalist? You left us guessing!"

From Ben Evardone, the former president of the student council of the University of the East: "Gud am. *Kala ko* I'l welcome u 2 d club *na* coz am runin 4 gov n Eastern Samar. *Binitin mo ako sa kolum mo.*" Translation: "Good morning. Thought I'd welcome you to the club because I'm running for governor in Eastern Samar. Your column left me guessing."

From Ateneo's Ed Gaddi, another esteemed lawyer: "This nation needs GOOD, not GOONS, in Congress. Run. Politics may not be ur cup of tea. Take coffee. Ur country needs u. Run 4 Congress!"

Sammy, Ben, Ed and I go a long way. Their text messages more or less mirrored the many reactions that I received in reaction to my column of December 28 regarding a plan to draft me to run for either mayor or congressman in Pangasinan. As I said, I am flattered.

Apunay met ten, Apo.

Rob Dix, the London-born mate of The Beatles who owns the biggest egg/chicks hatchery in Pangasinan, has also been egging me to run for mayor. And so does Jess Garcia, the nation's cycling icon, who even devoted an entire column in the Dagupan City Sun-Star urging me also to run for mayor.

"The mayorship is a bit low compared to your stature. I'd prefer that you run for governor," said Teddy Cruz, who will try to recapture his seat in Congress in May as he will challenge Rep. Amado "Spine" Espino. Spine, the exponent of gentlemanliness himself, had intimated to me in no small terms to join the political fray in May; I appreciate that from the bottom of my heart, Spine.

To be sure, Teddy is my revered *kumpadre*, Spine my durable drink mate. Teddy is with FPJ, Spine with GMA. They love me, want me in their parties. I love them, too, but I can't be both in their parties. They understand. Will always will. Like what I always tell my siblings, "Do not let politics ruin your character. Use politics to foster friendship, not pester friendship." The correct way to handle politics is to be always on top of it. Once you allow politics to be on top of you, that's the end to sanity.

As always, I believe that, like sports, politics is a great teacher. It builds character. It imparts lessons that are not available inside classrooms. It makes you victorious in the face of defeat, as in realizing in the end that one cannot win them all.

Oh, yes, perhaps, you must have noticed it by now. No one among my texters, my so-called supporters, has proposed that I run for president.

Maybe they believe I can't beat FPJ, the man to beat according to APJ.

Maybe. That's why I've been weighing my options meticulously. I'm even using the Sun Tzu method now in analyzing things. Since, in the first place, FPJ and I are both from Pangasinan, it wouldn't look nice, wouldn't be wise, for the two of us to be gunning for the Palace. Maybe, I'll just support him, if only to prove that the united opposition is alive and kicking? That should be an option worth looking into.

Maybe. Just maybe.

***

FASTBREAK. I was told an American surnamed Moran will coach Pilipinas Shell in the PBA next season. Either Mr. Moran is a super coach or Shell has lost its respect for the Filipino's ability to coach. Will somebody please stand up to clarify me on this? Batang Red Bull remains without a coach since Yeng Guiao is still undecided whether to seek a political office in Pampanga or not; Yeng is presently a provincial board member. I'm sure I will be among the first to know if Yeng will run or not. Yes, Yeng?

RP, Thailand join hands to boost athletics program

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINES is set to forge a partnership with Thailand in a rigid, large-scale program to discover and train young track and field athletes for future international events.

Acknowledging the country's potential in athletics, the Thailand national track and field body has also offered to work in tandem with the Philippines in holding new junior events between the two countries.

"Thailand knows that we are its strongest rival in athletics," said Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association president Go Teng Kok. "That's why we are joining hands with Thailand in putting up a strong grassroots development program."

Go is set to fly to Bangkok Jan. 18 to finalize the partnership and at the same time attend the Asian Grand Prix commission meeting there.

For starters, both Thailand and the Philippines have agreed to hold their national open tournaments just one week apart to allow maximum participation from both countries.

Thailand was overall champion during the recent Vietnam Southeast Asian Game with 13 golds, while the Philippines was second with eight in a tie with Malaysia and Vietnam.

GO Teng Kok

"Eight golds is too few compared to the 46 gold medals staked (in athletics)," said Go. "But everybody must understand that we are concentrating only in 20 events to make the most out of the money given to us by the Philippine Sports Commission."

He said if Patafa trains for all 46 events in athletics, it has to maintain no less than 120 athletes. Right now, it has 31 in its stable plus 16 more in the developmental pool.

Nevertheless, the Patafa wound up the winningest national sports association in the SEA Games.

Go added the Patafa would pay more attention to developing jumpers, noting that the country has been lording it in the women's long jump and triple jump in the region since the days of Elma Muros-Posadas.

He said there are also plans to strike a deal with colleges and universities in Baguio City to accommodate national tracksters who are mostly training in the PSC-owned facilities in Teachers' Camp.

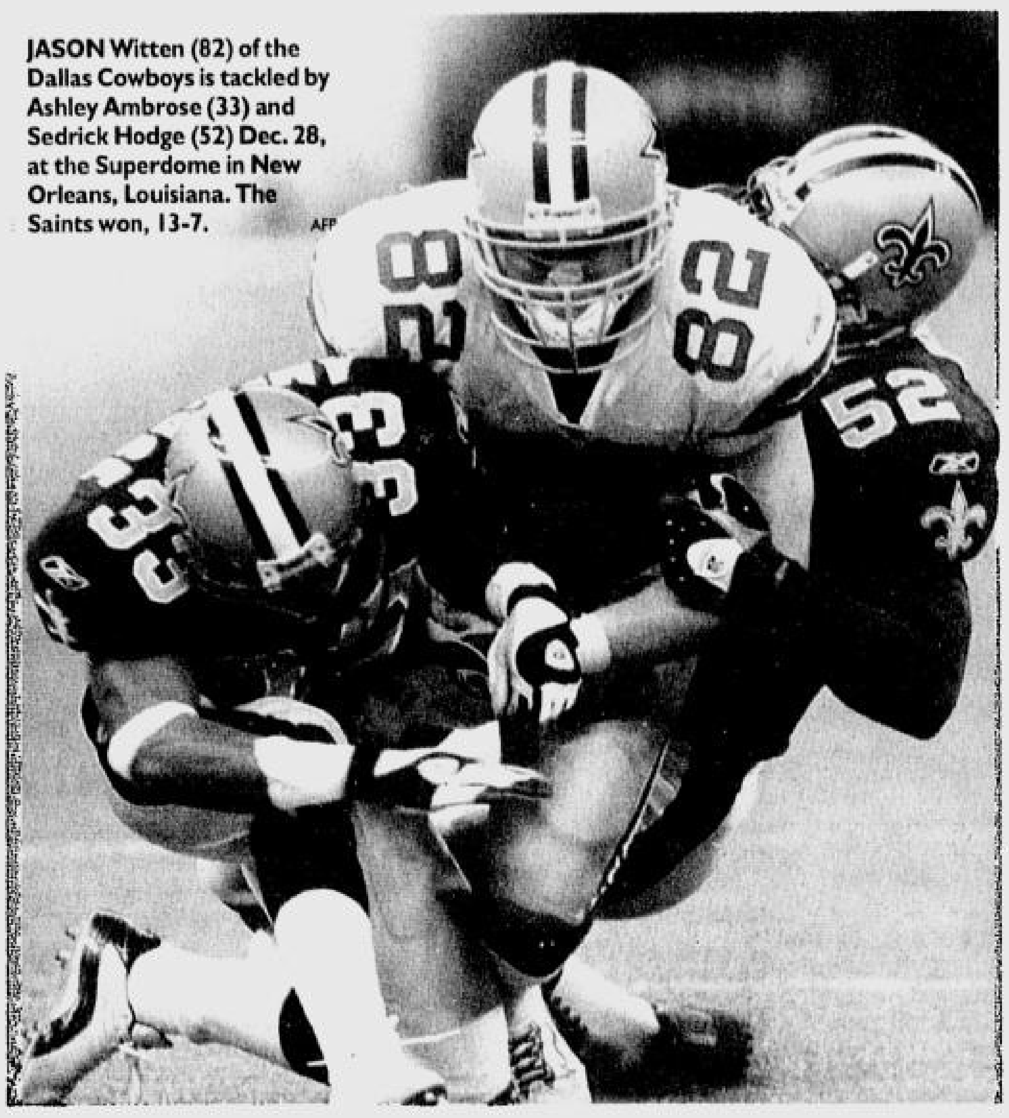
"Baguio is the ideal place to train the athletes but unfortunately, some of my athletes have to go down to Manila because of their studies," said Go. "If they can enroll in Baguio, then they can stay longer there to train."

Ateneo, San Beda rule Hoop Challenge

ATENEO subdued La Salle, 78-65, while San Beda ripped Benedictine International School, 78-57, to win the 13-under and 16-under titles, respectively, of the San Miguel Corp. Holiday Hoop Challenge over the weekend at the La Salle Greenhills gym in San Juan.

Felix Pepito and Andrew Felix combined for 30 points as the Blue Eaglets overpowered La Salle in the well-attended finals.

James Martinez and Jay-R Taganas led the Red Cubs' assault over Benedictine International School by scoring 25 and 19 points, respectively.



JASON Witten (82) of the Dallas Cowboys is tackled by Ashley Ambrose (33) and Sedrick Hodge (52) Dec. 28, at the Superdome in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Saints won, 13-7. AFP

Cards victory sends Packers to playoffs

TEMPE, Arizona—Arizona knocked the Minnesota Vikings out of the playoffs Sunday with a fourth-down miracle that put the Green Bay Packers in.

Josh McCown threw a 28-yard touchdown pass to Nathan Poole on fourth-and-25 as time expired, rallying the Cardinals to an 18-17 victory. That left the Vikings at 9-7 and gave the division title to the Packers, who beat Denver 31-3.

Had the Vikings won, Green Bay (10-6) would have been eliminated on a series of complicated tiebreakers.

Poole caught the ball near the sideline in the end zone, where officials ruled he was forced out by Minnesota's Denard Walker and called it a touchdown. A video review upheld the call.

Minnesota led 17-6 with two minutes left.

But Arizona (4-12) cut the lead to 17-12 on McCown's fourth-down 2-yard pass to Steve Bush with 1:54 to play.

Damien Anderson recovered the onside kick for Arizona, and a 30-yard pass-interference call against Walker put the Cardinals in scoring position.

The biggest cheer at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin, came for the play in Arizona that got the Packers into the playoffs.

Ahman Green reeled off a 98-yard touchdown run and Brett Favre completed a hard week in which he buried his father to lead Green Bay.

The Packers (10-6) had little hope of playing into January only minutes earlier. They celebrated wildly on the sideline after their crowd, listening on radios, broke into frenzied elation over the fourth-down pass in Arizona.

Denver (10-6) rested starters for its playoff game next Sunday in Indianapolis.

The Packers will host the Seattle Seahawks (10-6) and former coach Mike Holmgren on Sunday. The Packers beat the Seahawks, 35-13, at home on Oct. 5.

Green set a franchise record with 218 yards rushing and ran for two scores, giving him 20 and breaking Jim Taylor's record of 19 set in 1962.

In Baltimore, Jamal Lewis became the fifth player ever to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a season, but fell 39 yards of Eric Dickerson's 19-year-old record of 2,105.

Matt Stover's 47-yard field goal 3:28 into overtime gave the win to the Ravens (10-6.) They clinched the AFC North earlier in the day when Cincinnati lost to Cleveland.

Lewis finished with 114 yards on 27 carries. Jerome Bettis of Pittsburgh (6-10) ran for 54 yards to move pass Jim Brown into sixth place on the career list with 12,353.

In Cincinnati, rookie Lee Suggs ran for 186 yards and two touchdowns Sunday as Cleveland knocked Cincinnati from playoff contention by beating the Bengals 22-14.

That allowed the Baltimore Ravens to clinch the AFC North title several hours before playing Pittsburgh in the final regular-season game.

A renaissance season ended in a gut-wrenching disappointment for the Bengals (8-8), who reverted to form in their biggest game in 13 years against a Cleveland team that finished 5-11.

With a chance to stay in contention for at least a few more hours and clinch their first winning record since 1990, Cincinnati fell down. The largest crowd for a Bengals game in Cincinnati filed out silently after Jon Kitna's final pass was intercepted by Robert Griffith with 41 seconds left. *AP*

Boxer in coma after TKO

Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor

DANAO CITY—John Eman Juarez, a former amateur boxer from Cagayan de Oro, lapsed into a coma and underwent cranial surgery after he was knocked out by Rocky Fuentes in the fourth round of their scheduled 8-rounder in the "Mano-Mano: Halad Kang Mano Amon" card here Sunday.

Cebu's topnotch neurosurgeon, Dr. Benigno Aldana, performed the surgery on Juarez to drain blood clots from his brain, while trying at the same time to ease up the swelling of the brain.

"The surgery was performed successfully by Dr. Aldana, who is very qualified to do the job. I'm very thankful to him. Right now, the boxer is already at the intensive care unit, and we are just waiting for further developments," said sportsman Tony Aldeguer, manager of Fuentes.

"The doctor wondered whether Juarez was hit by something very hard and strong," noted promoter Sammy "Don King" Gello-ani, who will shoulder all the hospital expenses of Juarez.

Datu rules Baguio active chess

BAGUIO CITY—International Master Idelfonso Datu emerged champion in the Baguio Active Chess Competition here at the Dapayan Hall in University of Baguio, Sunday night.

The 2000 Istanbul Olympian posted six wins at the expense of 30th seed John Carino, 18th seed Manuel Alvez, 9th seed Rex Ami, 7th seed John John Mendoza of Baguio City, 5th seed NM Samuel Estimo and 10th seed Belsar Valencia of La Union before settling for a draw with 2nd seed Fide Master Adrian Ros Pacis in the seventh and final round to tally 6.5 points.

Datu received the top purse of P5,000 plus trophy in this two-day holiday season tournament organized by engineer Alfonso Rulloda of BAC. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

BRIBE RAPS

IOC vice president vows to cooperate

KIM

SEOUL—International Olympic Committee vice president Kim Un-Yong promised to cooperate fully after being summoned here Monday for questioning by South Korean prosecutors over corruption allegations.

"I will tell everything to the prosecution," Kim told journalists after arriving at the Seoul district prosecutors office.

Kim, one of South Korea's most powerful sports leaders, has denied his involvement in corruption allegations after prosecutors arrested a former local sports official accused of bribing him.

Investigators did not confirm the exact nature of the allegations against Kim, but Yonhap news agency said the 72-year-old faces grilling over corruption, embezzlement and taking foreign currency out of the country.

Earlier this month, prosecutors arrested Lee Kwang-Tae, a former Korea Olympic Committee (KOC) member who was in office from November 2000 to July 2002, for alleged corruption.

Prosecutors have refused to confirm Lee's charges, but Yonhap said Lee is suspected of providing 100 million won ($84,170) to Kim to help secure his KOC membership.

The arrest came after investigators raided Kim's home and office and seized a safe and documents.

Kim said in a statement that he was innocent, denouncing local media reports which described him as "a corrupt figure." Kim, who is also head of the World Taekwondo Federation, was one of several IOC members implicated in a corruption investigation surrounding the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

Kim's 40-year-old son, John Kim, was freed by a court in Bulgaria early this month after US authorities dropped their extradition demand on graft charges related to the Salt Lake City Olympics. *AFP*

Australia's Skandia yacht tops Sydney-Hobart race

HOBART, Australia—Australian super maxi Skandia sailed to a pre-dawn victory in the Sydney-Hobart yacht classic here Monday, finishing just 14 minutes ahead of its New Zealand rival Zana after a neck-and-neck duel that began on Boxing Day.

The giant Melbourne-based yacht took line honours as it crossed the finishing line after two days, 15 hours and 14.06 seconds of gruelling ocean racing in the premier event on the Australian yachting calendar.

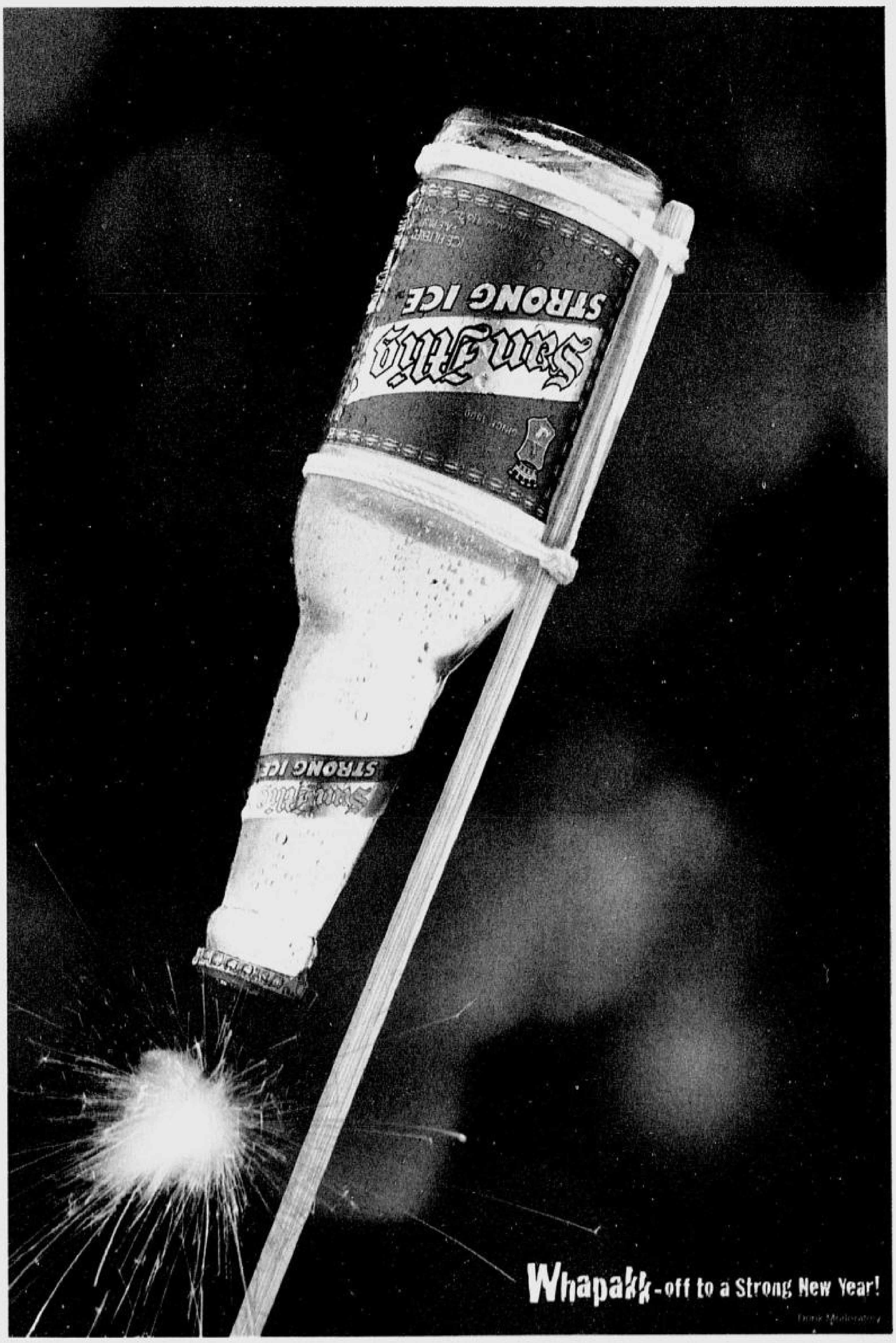
The pair were virtually abreast in the final stages after being locked in battle from start to finish in the 627 nautical mile race which left Sydney Harbour Friday amid a spectacular array of colorful spinnakers.

The two pre-race favorites were within sight of each other in the notorious Bass Strait leg and Zana drew level as Skandia became becalmed for tense minutes in the Derwent River leading into Hobart, capital of Austalia's island state of Tasmania.

Winning his first Sydney-Hobart in 16 starts, Skandia skipper and owner Grant Wharington described the result as his "greatest thrill in ocean racing." "We could see them (Zana) the whole way, except for 30 minutes this morning," a jubilant Wharington said.

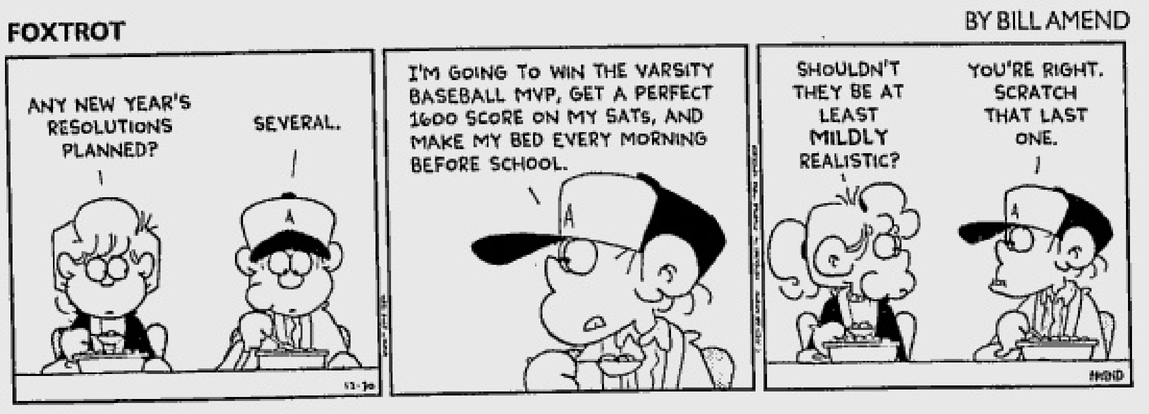
Sitting 30 meters (98 feet) in the water, the super maxis were by far the largest yachts in the 56-strong field and raced away from their rivals through Sydney Heads on Friday afternoon.

Wharington, whose purpose-built maxi became the first Australian designed, built and owned boat to take line honors in six years, later paid tribute to its designer, Don Jones, describing him as a genius. *AFP*



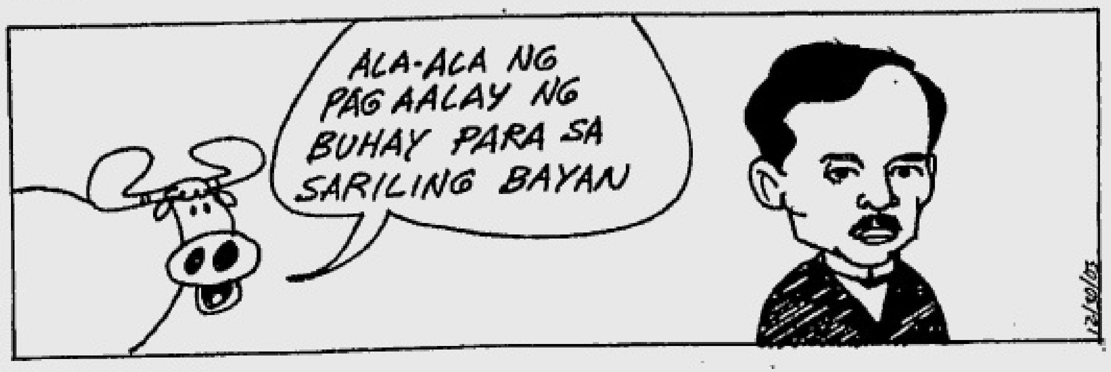
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


ANY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS PLANNED?
SEVERAL.
I'M GOING TO WIN THE VARSITY BASEBALL MVP, GET A PERFECT 1600 SCORE ON MY SATs, AND MAKE MY BED EVERY MORNING BEFORE SCHOOL.
SHOULDN'T THEY BE AT LEAST MILDLY REALISTIC?
YOU'RE RIGHT. SCRATCH THAT LAST ONE.
12-30

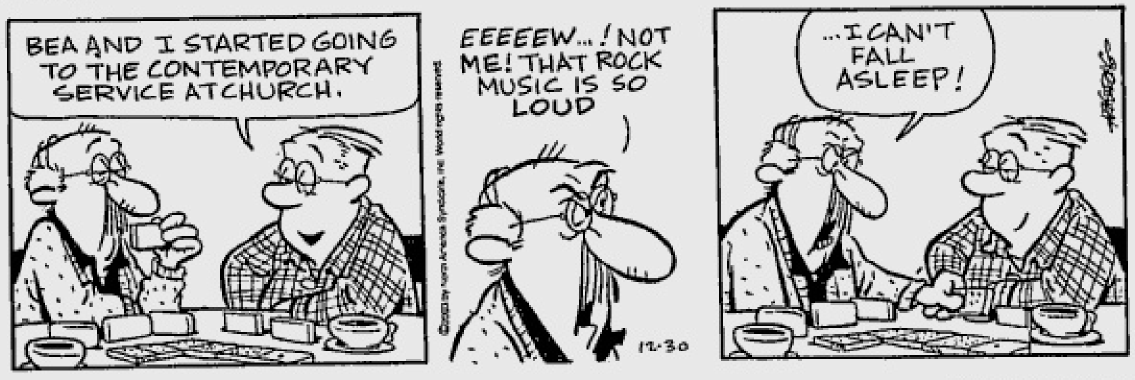
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ALA-ALA NG PAG AALAY NG BUHAY PARA SA SARILING BAYAN
12/30/03

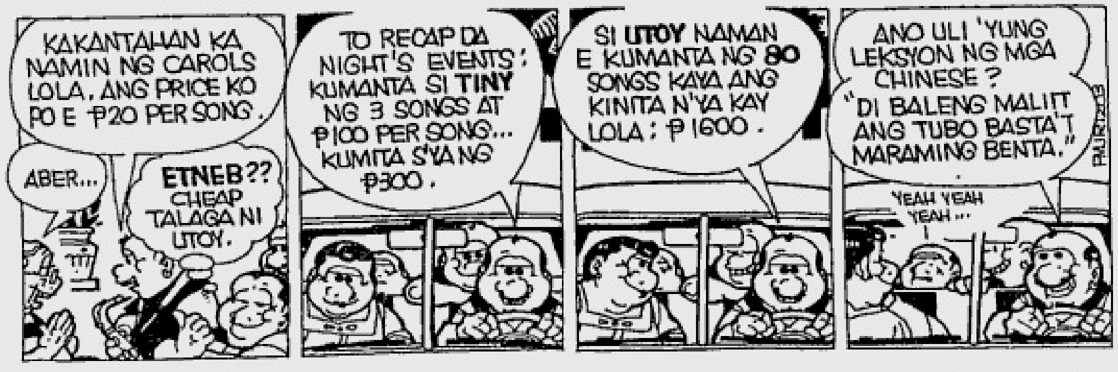
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BEA AND I STARTED GOING TO THE CONTEMPORARY SERVICE AT CHURCH.
EEEEEW...! NOT ME! THAT ROCK MUSIC IS SO LOUD
...I CAN'T FALL ASLEEP!
12-30

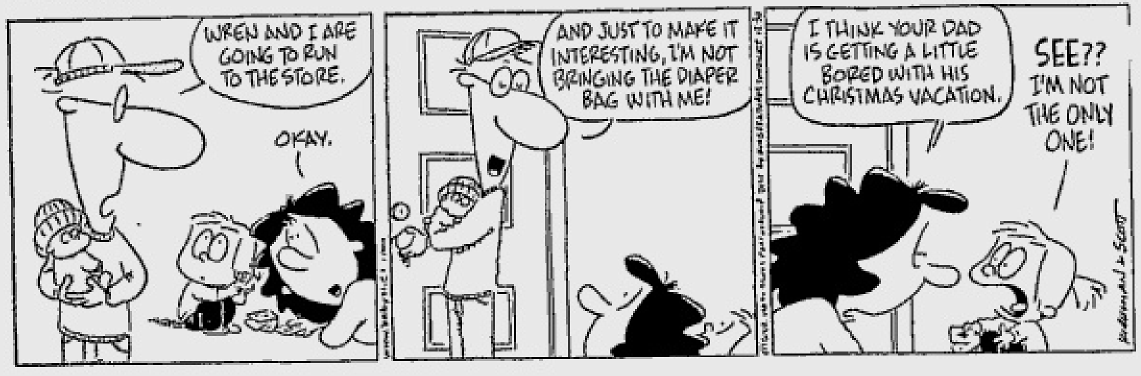
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


KAKANTAHAN KA NAMIN NG CAROLS LOLA. ANG PRICE KO PO E ₱20 PER SONG.
ABER...
ETNEB?? CHEAP TALAGA NI UTOY.
TO RECAP DA NIGHT'S EVENTS: KUMANTA SI TINY NG 3 SONGS AT ₱100 PER SONG... KUMITA S'YA NG ₱300.
SI UTOY NAMAN E KUMANTA NG 80 SONGS KAYA ANG KINITA N'YA KAY LOLA: ₱1600.
ANO ULI 'YUNG LEKSYON NG MGA CHINESE? "DI BALENG MALIIT ANG TUBO BASTA'T MARAMING BENTA."
YEAH YEAH YEAH...

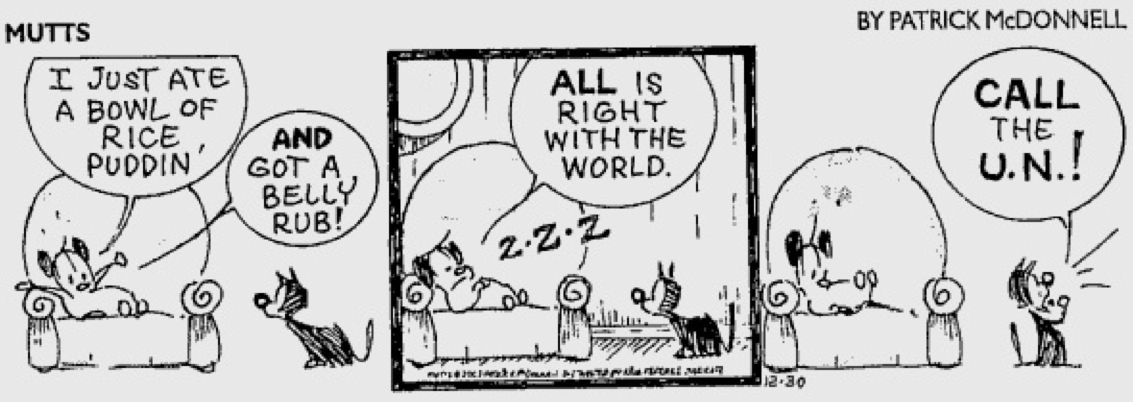
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WREN AND I ARE GOING TO RUN TO THE STORE.
OKAY.
AND JUST TO MAKE IT INTERESTING, I'M NOT BRINGING THE DIAPER BAG WITH ME!
I THINK YOUR DAD IS GETTING A LITTLE BORED WITH HIS CHRISTMAS VACATION.
SEE?? I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE!

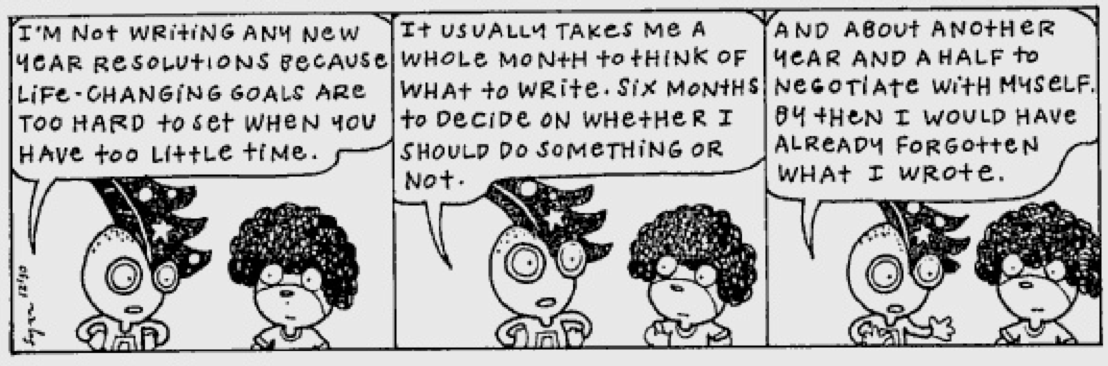
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I JUST ATE A BOWL OF RICE PUDDIN'
AND GOT A BELLY RUB!
ALL IS RIGHT WITH THE WORLD.
Z·Z·Z
CALL THE U.N.!
12·30

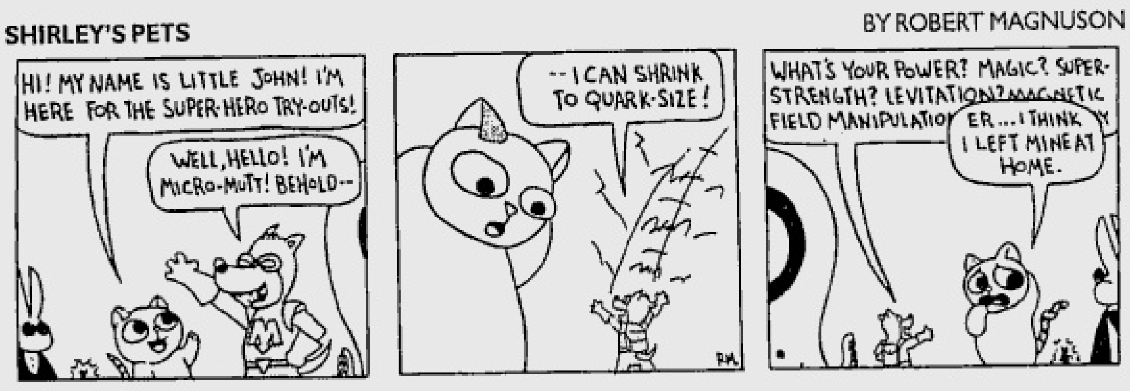
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I'M Not WRitiNG ANY New YeAR ResoLutioNS Because Life-CHANGiNG GoALS ARe Too HARD to set WHeN you HAve too Little time.
It usuALLY TAkes Me A WHoLe MoNtH to tHiNk oF WHAt to WRite. Six MoNtHS to Decide oN WHether I SHouLD Do SoMeTHiNG oR Not.
AND About ANotHeR YeAR AND A HALF to NegotiAte With Myself. By tHeN I WouLD HAve ALReADY ForGotteN WHAt I WRote.

SHIRLEY'S PETS

BY ROBERT MAGNUSON


HI! MY NAME IS LITTLE JOHN! I'M HERE FOR THE SUPER-HERO TRY-OUTS!
WELL, HELLO! I'M MICRO-MUTT! BEHOLD--
--I CAN SHRINK TO QUARK-SIZE!
WHAT'S YOUR POWER? MAGIC? SUPER-STRENGTH? LEVITATION? MAGNETIC FIELD MANIPULATION
ER...I THINK I LEFT MINE AT HOME.
RM

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Essentially, you are a pragmatic realist. You value traditions that are tried-and-true. You are reliable, dependable and have excellent organizational skills. You know how to run the show efficiently, and because of this, others look to you for direction. The year ahead presents several important choices for you. Choose wisely.

Birthdate of: Tiger Woods, golfer; Rudyard Kipling, writer; Bo Diddley, musician.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Because you feel very sympathetic today, you will go out of your way to help someone. Consider this an opportunity, because after all, what goes around comes around.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You have very high ambitions right now. You feel that you can succeed at what you want and at the same time benefit others. This is a win-win situation!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Fanciful hopes of travel to distant places intrigue you now. Similarly, secret dreams related to education and publishing are also exciting for you.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You might be on the receiving end of someone's generosity. By all means, accept whatever comes your way. It's important to accept gifts when they are offered to you.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Conversations with close friends are particularly tender and sweet today. You feel sympathetic to others because you find it easy to put yourself in someone else's shoes.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You feel grateful toward a co-worker today. People are ready to help you now, even if you have not asked for their assistance. This means that someone thinks you deserve a good turn.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your creative abilities are excellent today! Use this talent to work with children, to create art or simply to create entertaining diversions for yourself and others.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Family and relatives are grateful to you for your help today. Your sympathy and concern for others will not go unnoticed. (This is good, because kindness is one of the most important things in the world.)

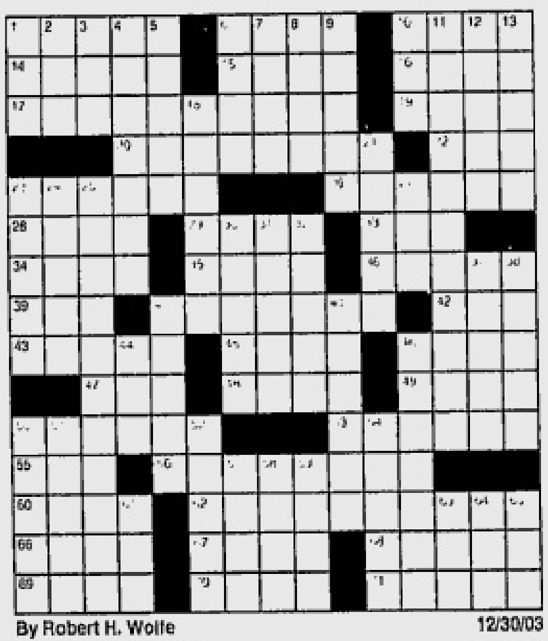
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't worry if you spend too much time daydreaming today. Einstein said your imagination is just your preview of life's coming attractions.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): The purchases of luxurious items will delight you today. If you can afford this, go right ahead. You want to get something special for yourself (or someone else).

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You feel a genuine, selfless kind of love for others today. You're willing to do anything that is of benefit to someone important you.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might be disappointed in a loved one who doesn't live up to your expectations. You might want to ask yourself: Are my expectations realistic?

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY
12/30/03

ACROSS
1 Military muddle
6 Scrambled order
10 Copies
14 Like Cheerios
15 Component
16 Pickling herb
17 Sugary dessert for one's honey?
19 Greek letter
20 Tennis official
22 Bunco game
23 Merman and Waters
26 Meeting accepted standards
28 Superman's girlfriend
29 Playful rascals
33 Fuss
34 "__ fair in love..."
35 Profound
36 Fissures
39 Theol. belief
40 Military divisions
42 Slice
43 Scent
45 Show concern
46 Guarded
47 Obese
48 Actor Baldwin
49 Related
50 Seethe again
53 Oregon city
55 Tavern brew
56 Flapdoodle
60 Aloha in Bologna
62 Sudden November leftover?
66 Peak in Sicily
67 Very dry
68 Domain
69 Writing table
70 Gentlewoman
71 __ ballerina

DOWN
1 Call for help
2 Slangy negative
3 Had lunch
4 With no service charge
5 Up to
6 Fencer's foil
7 Spaces between
8 Dismal
9 Bed or home ending
10 Carpentry tool
11 Easy slice of food?
12 John of rock
13 Particular bias
18 Like some jobs or jokes
21 Draws closer
23 Satellite of Jupiter
24 Chan's portrayer
25 Small tall order?
27 401
30 Holy city of Islam
31 Flower feature
32 Fern seed
37 City on the Po
38 "Funny Girl" composer
40 Glossy fabric
41 Late
44 Chairman of China
46 Bettor
50 Went fast
51 Select group
52 Homegrown
54 Overthrow
57 Asta's owner
58 Lost traction
59 Miniature whirlpool
61 __ Ridge, TN
63 Bandleader Winding
64 "A Nightmare on __ Street"
65 Singer Sumac

Monday's Puzzle Solved

S	A	L	E	■	V	I	P	S	■	N	O	A	H	S
A	M	O	S	■	E	D	I	T	■	I	B	S	E	N
R	E	N	T	■	L	E	N	A	■	T	E	T	R	A
A	S	G	O	O	D	A	S	N	E	W	■	H	A	P
■	■	■	N	U	T	S	■	■	L	I	M	I	T	S
S	T	A	I	R	S	■	B	R	I	T	O	N	■	■
M	E	S	A	S	■	G	R	E	A	S	E	G	U	N
E	S	P	■	■	S	O	A	P	S	■	■	S	R	O
E	T	R	U	S	C	A	N	S	■	L	O	G	I	N
■	■	O	S	W	A	L	D	■	L	A	N	O	S	E
S	U	M	N	E	R	■	■	C	A	N	E	■	■	■
U	R	I	■	A	S	E	A	S	Y	A	S	P	I	E
R	I	S	E	R	■	R	I	P	E	■	T	O	D	D
G	E	E	S	E	■	O	M	A	R	■	E	L	L	E
E	L	D	E	R	■	S	S	N	S	■	P	E	E	N

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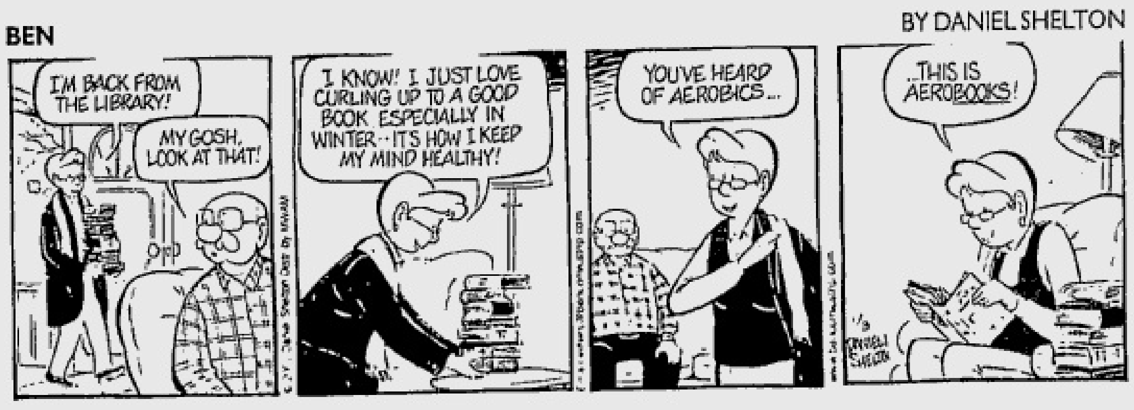
12/30/03

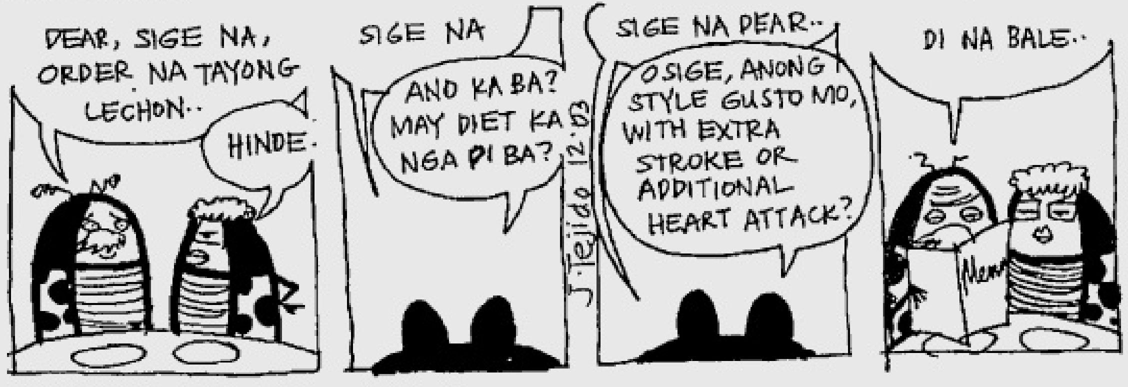
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


I'M BACK FROM THE LIBRARY!
MY GOSH, LOOK AT THAT!
I KNOW! I JUST LOVE CURLING UP TO A GOOD BOOK ESPECIALLY IN WINTER··ITS HOW I KEEP MY MIND HEALTHY!
YOU'VE HEARD OF AEROBICS...
..THIS IS AEROBOOKS!

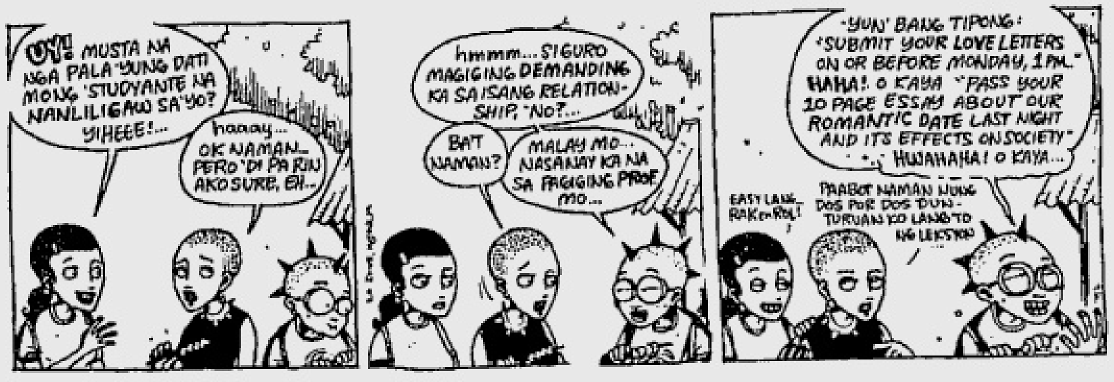
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


DEAR, SIGE NA, ORDER NA TAYONG LECHON..
HINDE.
SIGE NA
ANO KA BA? MAY DIET KA NGA DI BA?
J. Tejido 12.03
SIGE NA DEAR..
O SIGE, ANONG STYLE GUSTO MO, WITH EXTRA STROKE OR ADDITIONAL HEART ATTACK?
DI NA BALE..
Menu

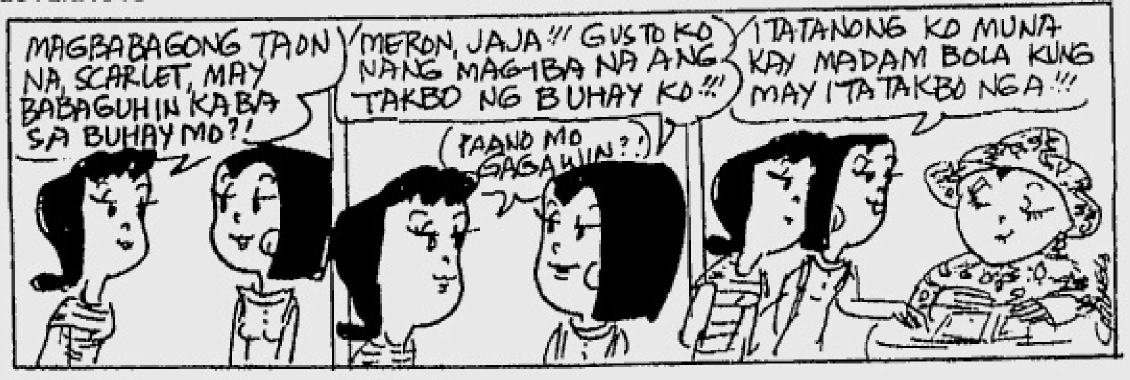
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


OY! MUSTA NA NGA PALA 'YUNG DATI MONG 'STUDYANTE NA NANLILIGAW SA'YO? YIHEEE!..
haaay... OK NAMAN... PERO 'DI PA RIN AKO SURE, EH..
hmmm... SIGURO MAGIGING DEMANDING KA SA ISANG RELATIONSHIP, 'NO?..
BA'T NAMAN?
MALAY MO... NASANAY KA NA SA PAGIGING PROF MO...
-'YUN' BANG TIPONG: "SUBMIT YOUR LOVE LETTERS ON OR BEFORE MONDAY, 1 P.M." HAHA! O KAYA "PASS YOUR 10 PAGE ESSAY ABOUT OUR ROMANTIC DATE LAST NIGHT AND ITS EFFECTS ON SOCIETY" HUWAHAHA! O KAYA...
EASY LANG, RAKENROL!
PAABOT NAMAN NUNG DOS POR DOS 'DUN-TURUAN KO LANG TO NG LEKSYON

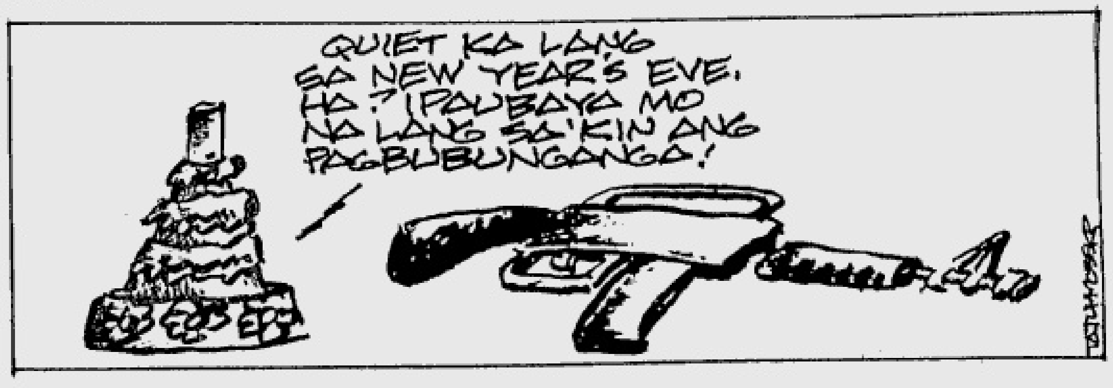
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MAGBABAGONG TAON NA, SCARLET, MAY BABAGUHIN KA BA SA BUHAY MO?!
MERON, JAJA!!! GUSTO KO NANG MAGIBA NA ANG TAKBO NG BUHAY KO!!!
PAANO MO GAGAWIN?!
ITATANONG KO MUNA KAY MADAM BOLA KUNG MAY ITATAKBO NGA!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


QUIET KA LANG SA NEW YEAR'S EVE, HA? IPAUBAYA MO NA LANG SA'KIN ANG PAGBUBUNGANGA!

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452

1	MANO PO 2
2	HOMECOMING
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	CAPTAIN BARBELL
8	FILIPINAS

SM CITY CEBU
2313876

1	MANO PO 2
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	HOMECOMING
4	FILIPINAS
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	MALIKMATA
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY BACOOR
4171968

1	CRYING LADIES
2	FILIPINAS
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MANO PO 2
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	MALIKMATA
7	HOMECOMING
8	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7120015

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	MANO PO 2
4	FILIPINAS
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975

1	CRYING LADIES
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	MALIKMATA
4	MANO PO 2

SM BICUTAN
7763055

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	MALIKMATA
3	MANO PO 2
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MARILAO

1	MALIKMATA
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2

SM STA. MESA
7149522 • 7161416

1	MANO PO 2
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	FANTASTIC MAN
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	MALIKMATA
8	HOMECOMING
9	FILIPINAS
10	MANO PO 2

SM SOUTHMALL
8068008

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS
3	CRYING LADIES
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	MANO PO 2
6	THE HOMECOMING
7	MALIKMATA
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	MANO PO 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	HOMECOMING
3	CRYING LADIES
4	MALIKMATA
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	MANO PO 2
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	MALIKMAFA
11	CRYING LADIES
12	FILIPINAS

SM CITY DAVAO
2976991

1	MANO PO 2
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY LUCENA
(042) 7108977-80

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	MANO PO 2
3	FILIPINAS
4	FANTASTIC MAN

SM MEGAMALL
6331901 • 6329401

1	MANO PO 2 RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6306800
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2
5	FILIPINAS
6	HOMECOMING
7	FANTASTIC MAN
8	CRYING LADIES
9	MALIKMATA
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	CAPTAIN BARBELL
12	FILIPINAS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MANO PO 2

SM CITY ILOILO
3389422

1	MALIKMATA
2	RESERVED
3	FILIPINAS
4	FANTASTIC MAN
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	RESERVED
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MANILA
5230240

1	FILIPINAS
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	HOMECOMING
8	FILIPINAS
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	CRYING LADIES
12	MALIKMATA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
(088) 8592984

1	MALIKMATA
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
(074) 4484505

1	MANO PO 2
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	CRYING LADIES
4	FANTASTIC MAN

THE PODIUM CINEMA

18 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City • 638 9781 - 85

1	CRYING LADIES 10:45 FS/12:15 MF/2:40/5:05/7:30/9:30 LFS/10:00 LMF/11:55 END
2	MANO PO 2 11:00 FS/11:20 MF/2:00/4:40/7:20/9:30 LFS/10:00 LMF/12:10 END

For Seat Reservation, call 633 8975 • LATE NIGHT SCREENING DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

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1	HOMECOMING 11:10, 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00 THX	4	MALIKMATA 10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
2	MANO PO 2 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50	5	FANTASTIC MAN 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00	6	'FILIPINAS 10:20, 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
7	CRYING LADIES 11:10, 1:45, 4:20, 6:55, 9:30	9	FILIPINAS 12:10, 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30
8	MALIKMATA 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30	10	CRYING LADIES 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00, 12:00

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1	MANO PO 2 - 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 10:00
2	FANTASTIC MAN - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
3	FILIPINAS - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
4	MALIKMATA - 10:40, 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 9:50
5	CAPTAIN BARBEL - 10:15, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
6	HOMECOMING - 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 10:00
7	CRYING LADIES - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00

Metro East
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682-8193/99
682-8280

1	MALIKMATA
2	HOMECOMING
3	MANO PO 2
4	FILIPINAS
5	CRYING LADIES
6	CAPTAIN BARBELL
7	FANTASTIC MAN
8	FILIPINAS

Novaliches
935-3229 / 31

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS
3	MALIKMATA
4	CRYING LADIES
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	MANO PO 2
7	HOMECOMING
8	MANO PO 2

Cainta
Brgy. Sto. Domingo Ortigas Extension

1	MALIKMATA
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	FANTASTIC MAN

Malabon
Caloocan
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1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	MALIKMATA
4	FILIPINAS

Sta. Rosa Laguna (049)837-0967		Lipa, Batangas (043)757-3664/312-5870
FANTASTIC MAN	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
MALIKMATA	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CRYING LADIES	4	FANTASTIC MAN
CAPTAIN BARBELL	5	MALIKMATA

Dasmariñas		Imus (046)471-8188 / 875-5850
MANO PO 2	1	FANTASTIC MAN
HOMECOMING	2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL	4	MANO PO 2
MALIKMATA	5	FILIPINAS
	6	HOMECOMING

Bacolod (034)441-0458/59		Iloilo (033)336-8070 to 78
MANO PO 2	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
CAPTAIN BARBELL	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	4	FANTASTIC MAN
MALIKMATA	5	MALIKMATA
ELF	6	CRYING LADIES

Star Mills
Sn Fernando Pampanga
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1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	FILIPINAS
4	MALIKMATA
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6	MANO PO 2

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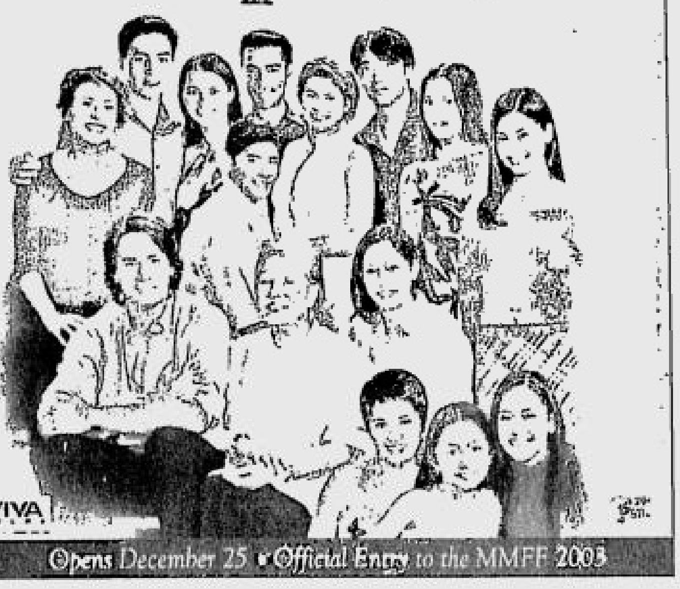

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RICA PERALEJO

MALIKMATA

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An OFFICIAL ENTRY to the 2003 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

NOW SHOWING

'Disney on Ice' special on IBC

SHOW TIME

AFTER its pre-Christmas TV show "An Enchanting Christmas Special," IBC-13 continues its Yuletide treat for children with the New Year special "Disney on Ice 2003" on Dec. 31 at 8 p.m.

The one-hour special features behind-the-scene stories of one of the most spectacular shows in the world, including the coverage of the arrival of the performers, trivia, a brief history of Disney, introduction of the "Beauty and the Beast" characters, interview with Disney personnel, and the making of "Beauty and the Beast on Ice."

A highlight of the special is an interview with two Filipino skaters in the cast.

The "Disney on Ice" special is hosted by VJ Iya.

A replay of "Disney on Ice 2003" will be aired on Jan. 1 at 2 p.m.

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Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	MANO PO 2
Ali 2	FILIPINAS
Ali 3	CAPTAIN BARBEL
Ali 4	CRYING LADIES
Ali 5	MALIKMATA
Ali 6	FANTASTIC MAN
Ali 7	HOMECOMING

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JAN 3	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 4	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 12	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
JAN 14	NCA 7-COCK DERBY

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MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	MALIKMATA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	LIBERATED
B	AKO IKAW SIYA
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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CINEMA 2	HOMECOMING 11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00	PG 13

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND • EX

HOMECOMING PG13 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00	FANTASTIKMAN GP 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50, 10:10	MANO PO 2 GP 11:40, 2:20, 5:00, 7:40, 10:30
CRYING LADIES PG13 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00	MALIKMATA PG13 1:25, 3:35, 5:45, 7:55, 10:00	FILIPINAS GP 11:30, 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:20

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 MANO PO 2	1 MANO PO 2	ArtFilm 1 FANTASTIC MAN 11 30 2 00 4 30 7 00 9 30	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 1 MANO PO 2 12 50 3 30 6 10 8 50 11 30	THX 1 MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN	2 HOMECOMING	2 MALIKMATA 11 05 1 10 3 15 5 20 7 25 9 30	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 2 HOMECOMING 12 40 2 50 5 00 7 10 9 20 11 30	2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FANTASTIC MAN 12 30 3 00 5 30 8 00 10 30	Onstage GLOW Dec. 29 & 30 - 8 pm	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FILIPINAS 11 00 1 30 4 00 6 30 9 00 11 30	3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 FILIPINAS		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 CAPTAIN BARBEL 11 00 1 30 4 00 6 30 9 00 11 30	4 CAPTAIN BARBEL
	5 MALIKMATA		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HOMECOMING 11 00 1 30 4 00 4 30 9 00 11 30	5 HOMECOMING
	6 CRYING LADIES			
	7 CAPTAIN BARBEL			

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3 (DTS) FANTASTIC MAN
4 GOLD (DTS) HOMECOMING
5 GOLD (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
6 GOLD (SDDS) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
7 GOLD (DOLBY) MANO PO-2
8 (DTS) CRYING LADIES
9 (SDDS) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
10 (SDDS) MANO PO-2

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2 (DOLBY) MANO PO
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DOLBY) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

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2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN

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2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
CAPT. BARBEL
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) MANO PO-2
5

METROPOLIS star
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(Alabang) tel 850.4285
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2 CRYING LADIES
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5 MALIKMATA
6 CAPT. BARBEL

M star
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(Las Pinas) tel 873.5004
1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 CAPT BARBEL

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) tel 892.2503

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 MANO PO
2 FANTASTIC MAN

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376
1 CRYING LADIES
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588
5 MALIKMATA
6 CAPT. BARBEL
7 (DTS) CRYING LADIES
8 (SDDS) FANTASTIC MAN
9 (DOLBY) MANO PO-2

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
1 MANO PO-2
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 (SDDS) PILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5 MALIKMATA
6 (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
7 (DTS) CAPT. BARBEL
8 CRYING LADIES
9 MANO PO-2

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0083
1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 (SDDS) HOMECOMING
3 (DTS) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DOLBY) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5 MANO PO-2

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795
1 CRYING LADIES
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 (DTS) CAPT. BARBEL
4 MANO PO-2
5 MALIKMATA

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1 RESERVE

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Dilson FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
Lords FANTASTIC MAN

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2 MALIKMATA
3 CRYING LADIES
4 CAPT. BARBEL

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
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1 (DOLBY) MANO PO-2
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 MALIKMATA
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 MALIKMATA

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
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Ali MALL CINEPLEX 7
1 MANO PO-2
2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 (THX DIGITAL) CAPT. BARBEL
4 (SDDS) CRYING LADIES
5 (DTS) MALIKMATA
6 FANTASTIC MAN
7 HOMECOMING
8
9

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) FANTASTIC MAN
2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 (DTS EX) MANO PO-2
4 CAPT BARBEL

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DTS) MANO PO-2

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 MANO PO-2
2 CRYING LADIES
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DTS) FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 MANO PO-2
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 (DTS) CRYING LADIES

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
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2 (DTS) MALIKMATA
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO 2

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 (DOLBY) CRYING LADIES
3 (DTS) MALIKMATA
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 MANO PO-2
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 (DOLBY) MALIKMATA

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 MALIKMATA
2 CAPTAIN BARBEL
3 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN
4 (DTS) MANO PO-2

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel)
1 SOON TO OPEN
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 MANO PO 2

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 HOMECOMING
4 (DTS) MANO PO-2

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) CAPT BARBEL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 (DTS) MALIKMATA
4 MANO PO-2
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883
1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 HOMECOMING

Olivarez Los Baños
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1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 MALIKMATA
3 HOMECOMING

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 MANO PO-2
3 (DTS) CRYING LADIES
4 (DOLBY) FANTASTIC MAN

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914
1 (DTS) CRYING LADIES

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 MANO PO 2
4 FANTASTIC MAN

Emperor
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2 MALIKMATA

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Relentless series of tests

THE ONGOING talent searches on "Extra Challenge" and "Star-struck" have impressed some viewers, but have bemused and irritated others.

On "Star-struck," 14 young talents have been put through a rigorous series of tests designed to push them to their limit and practically force them to become total performers who can sing, dance, do comedy and drama, interview people, do spiels, perform duets with established singing stars, work many hours without sleeping—etc.!

On "Extra Challenge," meanwhile, five young women are going through their own series of daunting and sometimes even harrowing tests, to determine which one of them "deserves" to replace **Miriam Quiambao** as **Paolo Bediones'** co-host on the reality-based show.

The tests on both shows are impressive because they're truly challenging and compel the finalists to do their utmost in order to pass muster. Thus, they do make the new talents improve, and this will serve them well when they become professional show biz talents.

On the other hand, some viewers are bemused because the shows expect the young talents to do much more than what established stars had to do to get discovered.

For instance, Miriam Quiambao never had to clamber up a billboard and eat nasty stuff to become Paolo's co-host on their show. All she had to do was become a beauty queen.

And all those judges and experts on "Star-struck" never had to be subjected to the relentless series of difficult and psychological stressful ordeals that the show's 14 (now down to seven) finalists have had to endure.

As catty viewers observe, if

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

those show biz veterans had to undergo all those tests, none of them may have emerged as winners!

So, what gives them the right to smugly subject the newcomers to those daunting challenges? They should really be more considerate and understanding.

Finally, some viewers get downright irritated because a number of the tests are too sadistic, and subject the young talents to stresses that vulnerable impressionable youth shouldn't be compelled to undergo. It smacks of the nasty initiation rites of some fraternities, which should have no place in show biz.

Scriptwriting workshop

From more than 4,000 applicants to the ABS-CBN free scriptwriting workshop to be conducted by **Ricky Lee**, 90 participants have been chosen. The first batch (full timers) started its workshop last Dec. 5; the second batch (part timers) will have its workshop during the first half of 2004.

First batch of participants: **Norgula Abdula, Kim Agapito, Celso Andres, Mark Angos, Mark Bacolod, Christine Badillo, Benedict Balda, Eden Bernal, Mike Bernaldez, Ruby Castro, Irvin Contreras, Neonica Cruz, Czarina de Guia, Ian del Carmen, Raz dela Torre, Mike Factor, Ricardo Fernando, Tristan Gaynor, Jennifer Lampaz, Irene Liao, Benjamin Lingan, Jeffrey Macabale, Anthony Melon, Cathy Merza, Jurey Mirafuentes, Jon Moll, Ruel Montañez, Homer Novicio, Edward Perez, Rosemarie Pua, Alquin Pulido, Joy Puntawe, Roger Ramos, Olivia Ranido, Generiza Reyes, Judith Ros, Angelo Roxas, Eduardo Roy, Rona Sales, Mel Santos, Jarell Serencio, Marco Soriano, Miguel Suaco, Carlo Ventura** and **Jayson Villamor.**

Participants in the second workshop will be informed either by phone or by mail.

Feedback

From **Alex O. Pertierra** of Makati City: "I read with interest your analysis of why the Filipino movie industry is experiencing difficult times. Your observations are valid, but one factor you overlook is the fact that the admission price for both local and foreign movies is the same. So, when made to choose between economical local productions and big-budget Hollywood imports, naturally many viewers choose the imported movies.

"Is this a sign of colonial mentality? It could be just good business sense—you buy the better product, all things like cost being equal. So, to compete, Filipino movies should try to match the foreign competition's production values. Nationalism is great, but when it is taken for granted, that's not so good."

'Premiere Premiere'

On the Cartoon Network's Cartoon Cartoon Friday, "Premiere Premiere" is the best place to catch all new episodes of original cartoons. New episodes of five programs will be screened:

Jan.2, 2004, "Samurai Jack." Jan. 9, "Time Squad." Jan. 16, "The Powerpuff Girls." Jan. 23, "Dexter's Laboratory." Jan. 30, "Ed, Edd 'n Eddy."

All Fridays of January at 6 p.m.

What the stars learned, what they hope to achieve

WHILE Christmas is said to be more for the kids, the dawning of a new year right after Christmas in turn hits the adults most.

Yup, even those who refuse to grow up. Whether we like it or not, we have to have something to show for it as another year comes to a close. More than looking back and looking forward, we must be able to find something when we look within ourselves.

With this thought in mind, I cornered some celebrities and asked them what's the best lesson they learned this year and what they want to accomplish next year.

Hope you all learned what you had to learn in 2003, and may you surprise yourselves by exceeding your own expectations next year. Bottoms up! Live it up in 2004!!

Korina Sanchez. "The

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

biggest lesson I learned this past year is never to give up hope. My mom was declared as good as dead and and I didn't give up. It paid off. I heard from someone never to give up on childlike innocence.

"Next year, I intend to pursue further studies, buy a house and maintain my career which has been so fruitful."

Karen Davila. "This year God put my faith to the test. During my trying times, I couldn't help but ask God if He had forgotten me, but I experienced His faithfulness in my career and personal life.

"Next year I want to work harder and do more reports that will change people's lives."

Katya Santos. "I learned how to be practical and to value money this past year.

"For 2004, I want to get into more business ventures and not just focus on show biz."

Medwin Marfil of Truefaith. "The most important lesson I picked up this year is that no matter how much I try to understand certain people and no matter how many times I've forgiven and given them chances, it is still in their nature to put me down. The best remedy is to forgive them in silence and stay the hell out of their way.

"I hope to be less tempered and be more patient and not to be judgmental in the coming year."

Nyoy Volante. "One thing I learned this year is that it's not how far you've achieved something that is appreciated. Instead, you are recognized because of the sincerity and quality of the work you've done.

"One thing I want to be able to do next year is to be ready for the Christmas season. I want to savor the Christmas spirit with my family."

Ogie Alcasid. "I learned that true friends are those who don't judge you. I also learned that, at the end of the day, what will make you happy are the simplest things in life and the ones closest to your heart.

"I would like to be able to help more people next year."

Melanie Marquez. "2003 taught me not to be too emotional.

"In 2004, I'd like to be more in tune with God. I also plan to put up a school for modeling if my schedule would allow it. I dream of hosting a TV show a la 'Velvet Rope.'"

Dominic Ochoa. "One major lesson I learned this year is that you can never really trust anybody in this business.

"Next year, I want to study again, learn more and kick some ass!"

Angelu de Leon. "The best lesson 2003 gave me is that I got closer to the Lord and I have a special relationship with Him now unlike before when I didn't even bother to think if He really loves me.

"I can't really say what I want to achieve next year. I don't plan that far."

Dingdong Avanzado. "This past year, I found out what God's real purpose and plan for me is and that has given me great joy and inner peace.

"Next year, the only thing I hope to be is a better husband to Jessa and a better dad to Jayda."

For feedback, e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

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'Goodnight, I love you'

From page A24

Angel agreed with Biboy about Miko being "*totoong tao at walang halong kaplastikan.*"

Biboy also remembered Miko's last words to him: "'*Ingat ka, baka malunod ka* (Careful, you might drown)."

That was when they talked on the phone last Sunday. Biboy was in Batangas on an outing with other friends, and Miko had found it weird that his friend was going swimming in the cold December weather.

"He was his usual *makulit* self," Biboy said the next day, only hours after his friend died in the accident.

Miko and Biboy's friendship dated back to their days together on the popular GMA 7 Saturday afternoon teen show "Click," where they were members of the first batch. They shared many secrets and many interests, including girls.

At the end of their very last phone conversation last Sunday, they agreed that Biboy would visit Miko in his condo unit the following day, Monday. Just a few hours after they talked, Miko fell to his death.

"Why is it that just when we were getting close to each other, he would go," cried Valerie Concepcion, Miko's co-star in the afternoon soap "Walang Hanggan" and in the movie, "Fantastic Man."

"I was with Miko and a group of friends last Saturday to watch our movie (Fantastic Man)," said Valerie. "I had no inkling it was to be our last time together."

Valerie will remember Miko for the way he looked at things. Despite his "*mapang-asar*" *nature, she said, Miko listened to her problems in all seriousness and gave her helpful advice.*

"Utol" was Tricia Roman and Miko's term of endearment for each other.

VALERIE Concepcion

"Miko is always a ready shoulder to cry on," said Tricia. "He was like a big brother to me because I always ran to him whenever I had problems I felt I couldn't handle. Talking to him always made me feel better."

Miko was part of the GMA Artist Center until a month ago. After the Artist Center launch last September, Miko showed renewed enthusiasm in his career and even composed a rap number that he performed during the launch.

Many people in show biz know that Oyo Boy—son of Vic Sotto and Dina Bonnevie—and Miko were very, very close, treating each other not as cousins but as brothers. They were often seen together, whether in show biz affairs or other outings.

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'I'd slit my wrists before I'd hurt a child'

NEW YORK—Michael Jackson said in an interview with the CBS television network that he still believes it's acceptable to sleep with children and that he would "slit my wrists" before he would hurt a child.

Jackson, arrested Nov. 20 on suspicion of child molestation, denied the charges against him during an interview with Ed Bradley conducted Christmas night and set to air Sunday on the CBS television news magazine "60 Minutes." CBS released a portion of the interview on Friday.

Jackson, 45, is charged with seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts upon a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent. He remains free on $3-million bail.

Asked by Bradley if it was still OK to sleep with children given the charges against him, Jackson answered, "Of course."

"Why not?" he said. "If you're going to be a pedophile, if you're going to be Jack the Ripper, if you're going to be a murderer, it's not a good idea. That I am not."

"Before I would hurt a child, I would slit my wrists," Jackson also said.

CBS confirmed comments about the alleged victim that Jackson's lawyer, Mark Geragos, said his client made during the interview: "I didn't sleep in bed with the child. Even if I did, it's OK. I slept on the floor. I give the bed to the child."

The pop singer, interviewed in a Los Angeles hotel room, said the police search of his Neverland Ranch in California had been overdone and so violated his privacy that it will never be the same for him.

"I won't live there ever again," he said. "It's a house now. It's not a home anymore. I'll only visit."

Meanwhile on Friday, CBS also announced that it had rescheduled a Jackson music special that had been abruptly postponed last month after the molestation charges surfaced.

The special will air on Friday, Jan. 2.

Bradley had been pursuing an interview with Jackson even before the molestation charges. The CBS newsman had traveled to Neverland last February for an interview, but Jackson got cold feet and canceled the interview at the last minute. *AP*

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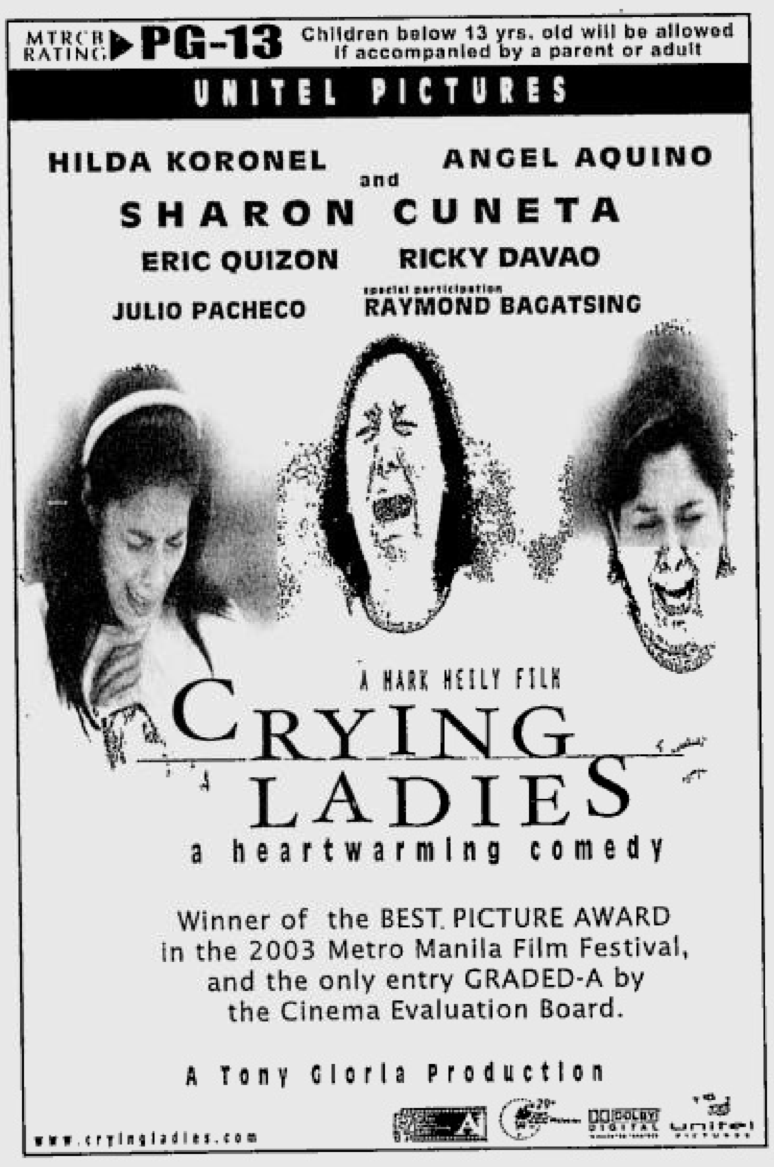
Editor Louie C. Camino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'Goodnight, I love you'

By Peachy Vibal- Guioguio
Contributor

AROUND 1 a.m. yesterday, young star Angel Locsin got a goodnight call from her boyfriend, Miko Sotto.

"He was having some problems with his computer, so he asked Oyo Boy (Sotto, his cousin) and a friend to come to his condo unit to help him fix it," Angel said. "I told him to get some sleep. Before he hung up, he told me he loved me."

Those were the last words Miko told Angel, the grieving girl said. Just a few hours later, Miko was dead from a fall from his 9th floor condo unit in Mandaluyong City.

Angel is hurting as much as Miko's family for she and Miko had been inseparable and were in fact together the day before the accident.

"He was very happy these past days," Angel told this writer in between sobs.

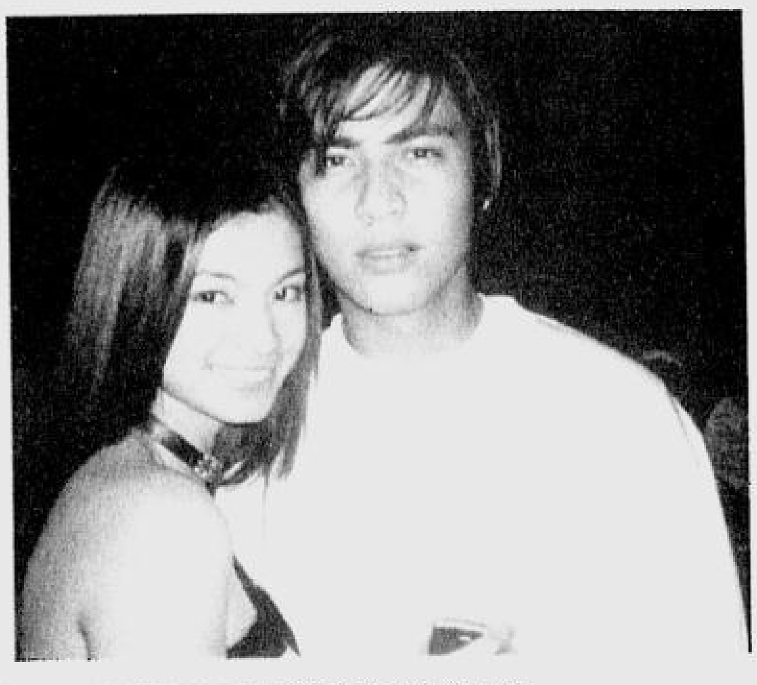
She and Miko had attended Mass together on Sunday upon Miko's urging. "I was lazy to go to church but Miko insisted that we go," she said.

Miko, she said, had very few friends but the few friends he had were solidly with him. And he also loved his mother, actress Ali Sotto, very much, she remembered.

"*Lahat gagawin niya para sa* mommy *niya, para sa* family *niya*," Angel added.

"People often found Miko aloof and with an attitude," said Miko's close friend, Biboy Ramirez. "Actually, he was a good guy. He wasn't show biz in the sense that *kung 'di ka niya gusto, 'di ka niya gusto. Totoo siyang tao.*"

GOODNIGHT/ A23



MIKO Sotto, 21, might seem to have an attitude but he was "totoong tao," according to his close friends Angel Locsin (with him above in the Dec. 19 Christmas party at GMA Network) and Biboy Ramirez (in jacket).

Ricky Davao, star of the Metro Manila Film Festival entry "Crying Ladies," watched his own movie on its opening on Christmas Day at the Alabang Town Center. He was with his wife **Jackielou Blanco** and their three children. Also seen lining up at the box-office was Premier Productions producer **Cirio H. Santiago** to buy tickets to his own entry, "Captain Barbell," released by Viva Films. The 4 p.m. screening was already full, so Cirio and his wife bought tickets for the 6 p.m. showing and killed time at Starbucks.

DID YOU KNOW...

Vernie Varga and husband **Ric Oledan** did last-minute shopping for grocery at the South Supermarket at the Alabang Town Center. Vernie remains a head-turner after all these years.

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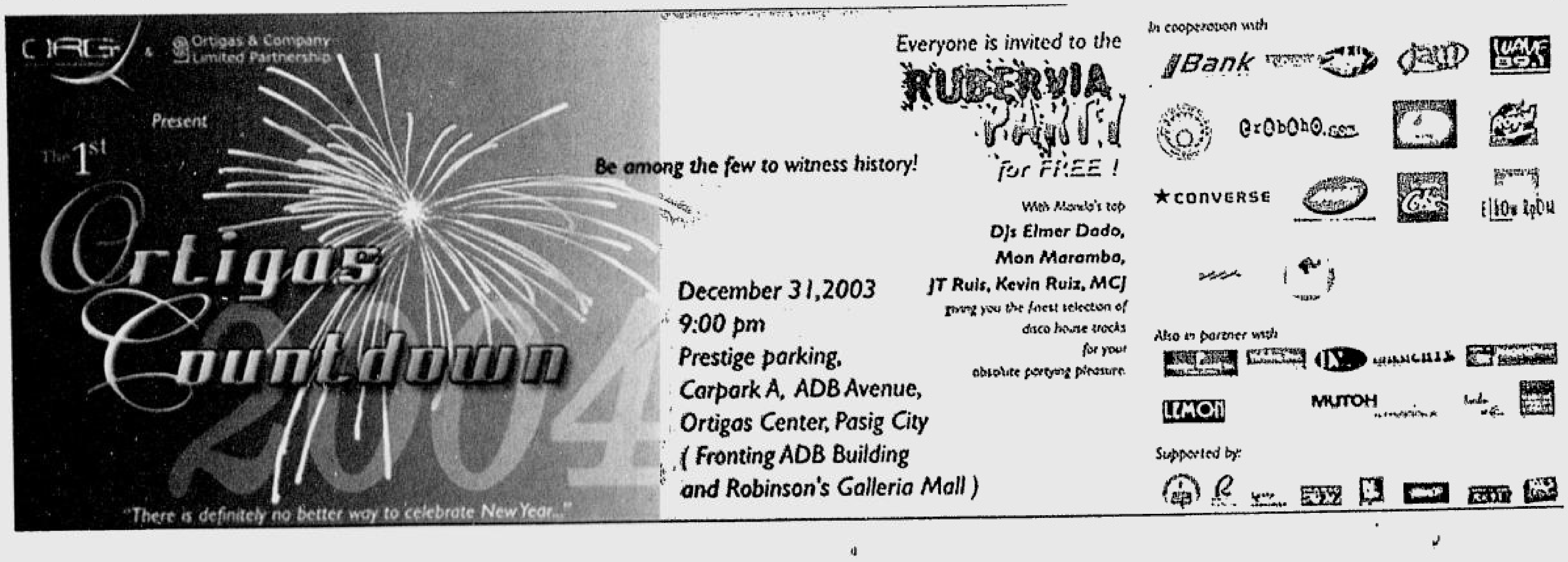
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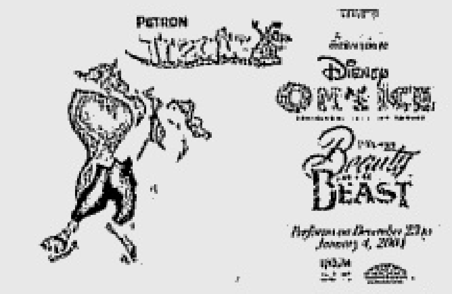

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Stocks near 2-year highs on fresh optimism for '04

WHAT'S INSIDE

- ▨ **Foreign debt load balloons to $56.3B in 3rd quarter** /B2
- ▨ **China approves new banking laws** /B3

By Doris C. Dumlao

STOCKS advanced to nearly a two-year high yesterday as investors dressed up their accounts ahead of the New Year and fresh optimism on the local and global economies.

Analysts said there could be follow-through buying today, the last trading day of the year, backed by a rosy economic outlook for 2004 despite political uncertainties related to May national elections.

The main stock index climbed 23.30 points or 1.63 percent to end at 1,450.70 points, the highest closing mark since February 2002. The market has risen 42.45 percent so far this year.

Value turnover was thin at P412.94 million. The market was closed on Dec. 24 and 26 for the Christmas holidays. Gainers outnumbered losers 36 to 16, while 43 stocks were unchanged.

"There was continued buying interest given that most investors are positioning, buying for 2004. At the same time, there is still some window-dressing," said Astro del Castillo, director of the Association of Securities Analysts of the Philippines.

He noted that investors were accumulating stocks for 2004 to take advantage of improved corporate earnings over the past few quarters.

"Also, the global economy is rebounding and somehow we might be caught in the bandwagon," Del Castillo said.

"Much of the optimism stems from the outlook given by BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura that fourth quarter GDP (gross domestic product) may have grown between 4.2 and 4.4 percent, bringing the full year's figure to the higher end of the 3.8-4.4 percent target," said brokerage ATR-Kim Eng Securities in its daily market report.

"The market is going up on thin volume, which is characteristic of window-dressing," said Jose Vistan, analyst at AB Capital Securities Inc. "Given the strong rise, follow-through buying is expected, probably smaller gains and even thinner volume." He said the next resistance in the main index is at 1,480 points.

Analysts said the market outlook remained positive due to healthy profit expectations and a better economic outlook for 2004. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said it expected economic growth of 4.2-4.4 percent in the fourth quarter, allowing the Philippines to meet the 4.2-percent growth target for the full-year, partly due to strong consumer spending ahead of the Christmas holidays.

Officials earlier said they expected the economy to expand by up to 5.8 percent in 2004.

Investors also shrugged off news of a deadlock in the collective bargaining agreement with the Philippine Long Distance Telephone union, as the telecom giant still led the list of index gainers, rising by P45 to close at P980 and gobbling up almost half of the day's volume.

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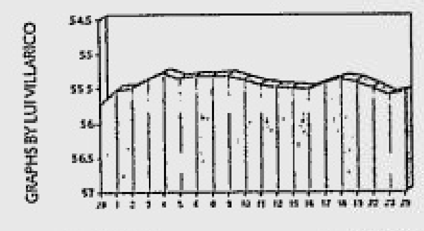
URRENCIES



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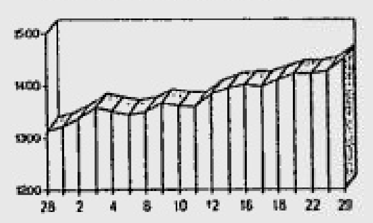
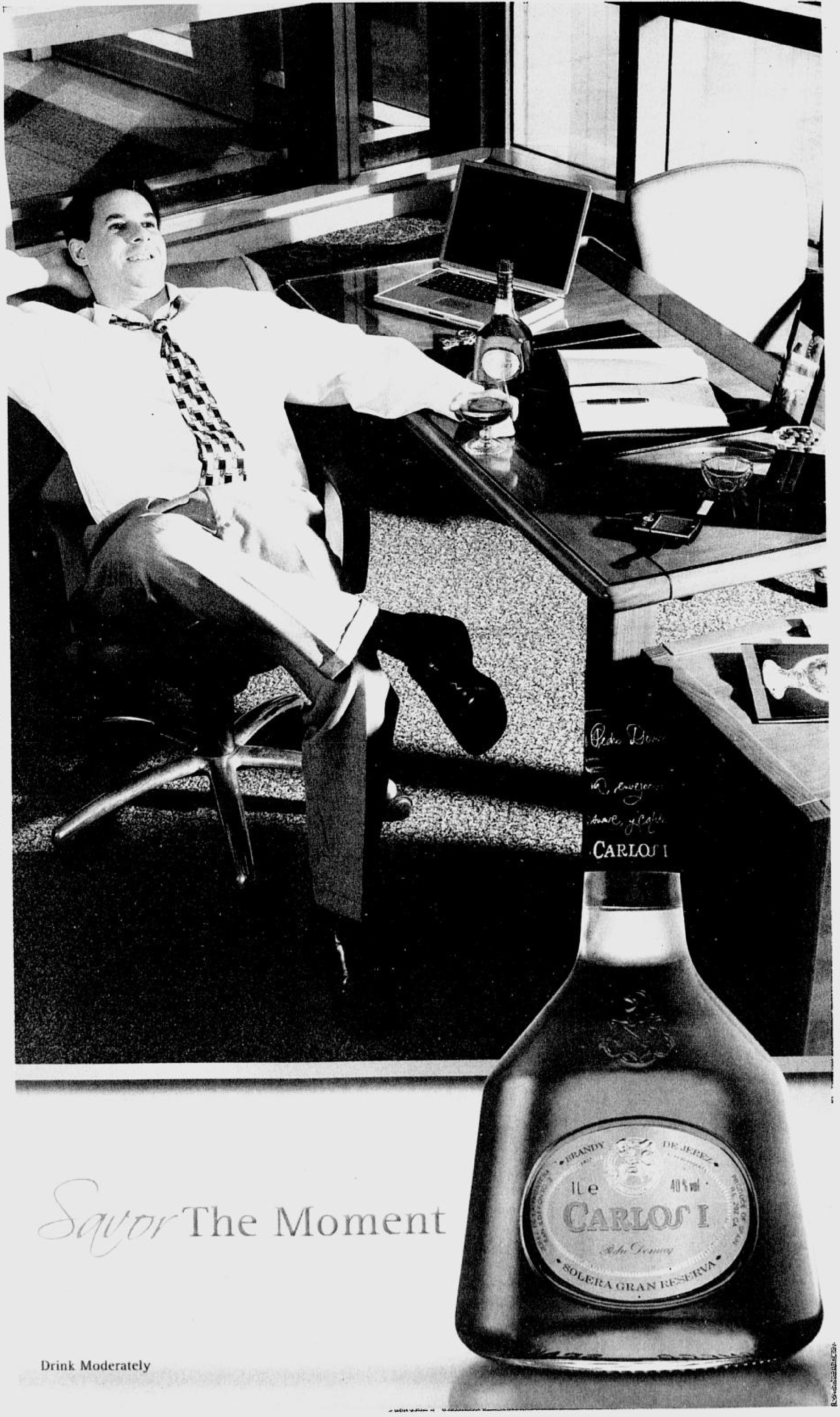


(See stock market report on Page B2)



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Foreign debt load balloons to $56.3B in 3rd quarter

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES' foreign debt rose by $2.7 billion or 5 percent to $56.3 billion as of the end of the third quarter from $53.6 billion a year ago due to the massive borrowings of the government to finance a gaping budget deficit, documents from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed.

By the end of the year, the country's external debt would likely hit the $57-billion mark to reflect the aggressive borrowings of the national government and the BSP during the fourth quarter.

Compared to the previous quarter, however, the foreign debt stock was up by only $200 million from $56.1 billion as of end-June.

"The increase was largely due to a net loan inflow particularly from public sector accounts," according to BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

In the third quarter, the national government added $750 million in fresh borrowings on behalf of the cash-strapped National Power Corp. The state-owned power firm also received the proceeds of a $250-million bond issue during the third quarter.

"Disbursements of medium and long-term accounts during the third quarter reached more than $1.85 billion with 87 percent pertaining to public sector borrowers. About half were for the national government's requirements while the rest went to various public and private sector projects with the biggest amounts going to power and energy development or about 20 percent and transportation, communication and other infrastructure projects worth 10 percent," the BSP said.

Buenaventura said the external debt stock would have increased by an additional $1.3 billion due to some foreign exchange revaluation adjustment as most third currencies, particularly the Japanese yen, appreciated against the US dollar.

But the impact of the revaluation was cushioned by the continued increase in residents' placements in Philippine dollar-denominated bonds.

The growing external debt is seen to add more pressure to the country's burgeoning public debt that stood at P5.16 trillion as of end-2002. Of the consolidated sovereign debt stock last year, $45.2 billion was in foreign currencies, according to the Department of Finance.

Foreign debts captured by the central bank are the combined borrowings of the government and private companies that have to secure the BSP's approval for any offshore borrowing.

Criticized for its huge debt burden, the country had been forced to earmark about 40 percent of the annual budget to pay the government's maturing debts, leaving little room to improve infrastructure and social services.

Even the International Monetary Fund has expressed alarm over the increasing level of public debt in emerging economies like the Philippines.

In the IMF's World Economic Outlook, the Fund said that at current trends, the level of public debt in most Asian and Latin American countries was far from being sustainable given that on its own calculations, "the sustainable public debt level for a typical emerging market economy may only be 25 percent of GDP, compared to 75 percent of GDP for a typical industrial country."

Through the years, the country's foreign debt stock had been increasing, the increments larger a year after the 1997 Asian financial crisis struck. The external debt stock stood at about $25 billion during the debt crisis years of the early 1980s and steadily grew to $41.87 billion in 1996.

By 1997, the foreign debt level reached $45.43 billion, rising to $47.82 billion in 1998. A year later, it broke the $50-billion mark and stood at $52.21 billion.

Buenaventura said that 89 percent of the total debts were maturing over the medium- and long-term or five years or more. Only 11 percent of the outstanding debts are falling due in a year's time.

ICTSI to convert ₱3.5B in advances into shares

By Doris C. Dumlao

PORT operator International Container Terminal Services, Inc. is set to convert about P3.5 billion worth of advances to two subsidiaries into either preferred shares or equity.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, ICTSI said its board of directors recently agreed to convert P2.4 billion worth of advances to wholly-owned International Container Terminal Holdings Inc. (ICTHI) into preferred redeemable shares.

The board likewise approved the conversion of P1.09 billion worth of advances to ICTSI Warehousing Inc. (IWI) into deposit for future subscription in this subsidiary. As such, the exposure to this unit shall be reclassified in its books as investment instead of advances.

ICTHI is the Cayman Island subsidiary which holds the shareholdings in ICTSI, the established corporate vehicle for all offshore projects.

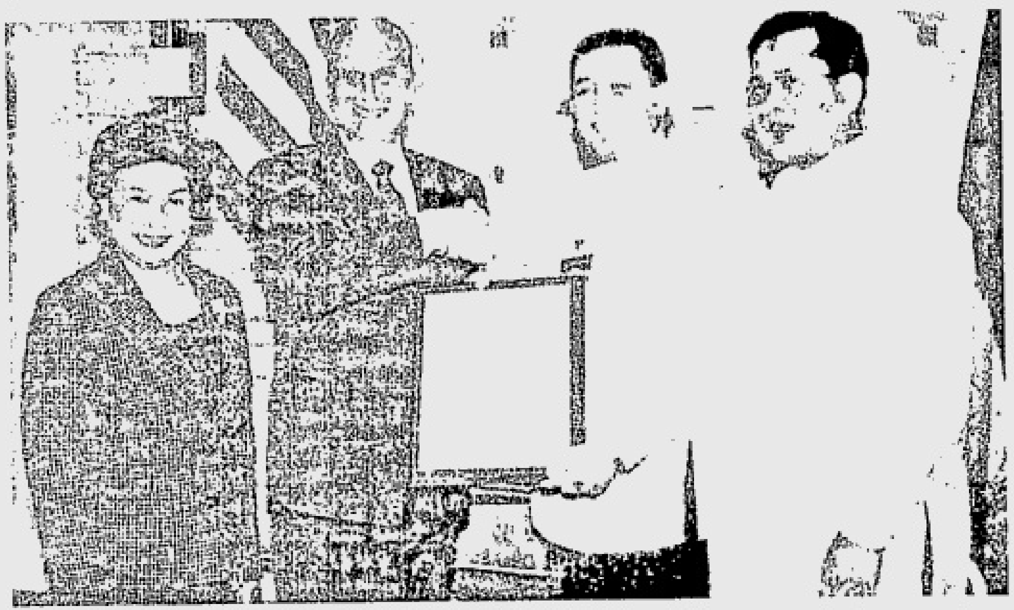
After selling its interest in ICTSI International Holdings Corp. to a unit of the Hong Kong-based Hutchison conglomerate in order to address its foreign debts, ICTSI has renewed its appetite for overseas expansion.

On the other hand, IWI holds ICTSI's 60-percent stake in Bauan International Port Inc., among other assets. BIPI operates a container port handling facility in Bauan, Batangas with net assets amounting to over P1 billion as of end-September this year.

During the first nine months of the year, ICTSI, the country's largest private port operator, said its consolidated profit in the third quarter fell by 28 percent to P98 million from P137 million last year due to higher interest charges from long-term borrowings.

As such, it only managed to post a profit of P320 million in the first nine months of the year, far below the P3.6 billion in profit it registered last year. The huge income last year, however reflected the extraordinary gain of P3.7 billion from the sale of IIHC to Hutchison Port Holdings Ltd.

Earlier, the Philippine Rating Services Corp. upgraded ICTSI's P1 billion-LTCPs from PRS A to PRS Aa on account of the improvement in the company's liquidity position.



INTEL Technology Philippines Inc.. the assembly and test operations site of Intel Corporation in the country, recently received the 2003 Secretary of State's Award for Corporate Excellence from the US State Department. ITPI general manager Robin Martin (second from right) accepted the special citation from US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone (second from left) in an awarding ceremony at the US Embassy. The Award for Corporate Excellence was established in recognition of the important role US businesses play abroad as good corporate citizens. Intel's corporate social responsibility initiatives include Intel Innovation in Education programs and Intel Teach to the Future.

PLDT, AT&T still seeking solution to rates dispute

By Abigail L. Ho

NEGOTIATIONS between industry giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and American carrier AT&T Corp. to resolve a months-long rates dispute are continuing to progress, although at a slower pace than expected.

PLDT president and chief executive Manuel Pangilinan said discussions between the two telecom firms were still ongoing, but an agreement had yet to be forged.

Unlike its parent firm, PLDT cellular subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. had already struck an agreement with AT&T, effectively opening up direct connection with the American carrier's network.

Under the interim agreement, Smart will restore all direct call connections of AT&T to its network. AT&T will also be granted direct inbound calls and access from the United States to the local mobile operator's network.

AT&T, on the other hand, will settle all its outstanding obligations as well as unpaid termination rates to Smart.

"We have agreed to put aside our differences and come up with a win-win situation. Smart got what it wanted and AT&T also got an acceptable result in the interim," Smart legal, external and carrier relations head Rogelio Quevedo earlier said.

But Smart's entering into an agreement with AT&T did not necessarily mean that PLDT should get into a similar agreement at about the same time.

Pangilinan said the two companies were "run quite independently," with management decisions based on what would be best for the firms.

"They pursue independent causes. In this particular matter, it is quite important that we demonstrate to the US FCC that they (PLDT and Smart) are not acting in collusion. And indeed we're not," he said.

ERC chief quits to run in May polls

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TWO key energy officials have quit their post to be able to run for elective offices and for health reasons.

Chair Manuel Sanchez of the Energy Regulatory Commission yesterday announced he had resigned effective today as he was running for a seat in Congress.

"I am challenging incumbent Rep. Michael John Duavit in the first District of Rizal," the lawyer said.

Sanchez occupied that office between 1992 and 1994 before he was unseated for being an American citizen.

SANCHEZ

"I have resolved all questions about my citizenship. I was actually repatriated (reaquired a Filipino citizenship) in 1995," said Sanchez, who is a resident of Angono town.

He said he would file his certificate of candidacy as a bet of the LP-Lakas coalition.

He also said he was supposed to turn over his office to his successor on Jan. 5 but that Malacañang has yet to name his replacement.

Edgardo del Fonso, president of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., had also resigned effective today citing health reasons.

Del Fonso underwent a double heart bypass surgery in the middle of this year.

Psalm officials said there was no information available on who would takeover the agency's helm.

However, government sources said National Economic and Development Authority deputy director general Raphael Lotilla was expected to succeed Del Fonso.

SBMA defends joint-venture deal with ICTSI

By Michelle V. Remo

THE SUBIC Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) has defended its joint-venture agreement with International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) on the cargo-handling operations at the Naval Supply Depot in the Subic Bay Freeport Zone.

In a letter to Neda Director General Romulo Neri, SBMA Chair Felicito Payumo said the partnership between SBMA and ICTSI on cargo-handling activities would benefit Subic because it was expected to boost maritime trade in the area.

He also said the SBMA was seen to gain financially from the partnership because it would be entitled to 10 percent of the joint venture's gross revenue and 15 percent of its profits.

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, who was also former SBMA chair, alleged that the joint venture was a "sweetheart deal" between ICTSI and the Subic agency.

The Department of Finance and the National Economic and Development Authority, for their part, earlier questioned the necessity of the joint venture, hinting that the SBMA could be at the losing end of the deal.

In particular, the finance department said the SBMA should have the right to a 76-percent equity share—and not 15 percent—in the joint venture based on its assessment of the value of the SBMA's 10-hectare property where the cargo-handling facilities are installed.

The property is the SBMA's share in the joint venture. ICTSI's assumption of its 85-percent equity share in the joint venture was reported to be commensurate with a P160-million investment in equipment and cargo-handling facilities.

Payumo dispelled the allegations, saying the joint venture would have no adverse effect on the SBMA's revenue.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 29, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.8	14,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.5	17.25	17.5	25,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46.5	47	46.5	47	329,500
China Banking Corp.	670	670	670	670	960
Equitable Pci Bank Inc.	34	34	34	34	79,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	27	26.5	26.5	119,500
Philippine National Bank	24.25	24.5	24.25	24.25	76,900
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	100
Security Bank Corp.	16.75	16.75	16.5	16.75	150,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	27	27	27	27	4,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	30,000
First Abacus Financial	0.3	0.52	0.3	0.52	560,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	38,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1325	1335	1325	1335	460
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	630,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	845	865	845	865	32,300
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.041	0.04	0.041	3,100,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.89	0.9	1,250,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	935	985	935	980	211,930
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	15,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.75	15	14.75	15	17,900
Manila Electric Co. B	24.25	24.5	24.25	24.25	1,460,900
Petron Corp.	2.32	2.32	2.28	2.28	2,919,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.97	0.98	0.97	0.98	550,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	528,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	190,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	670,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	309,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.06	1.08	2,330,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3	3	253,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31.5	32	31.5	32	20,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18	18.25	18	18.25	373,800
RFM Corp.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	60,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	10,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54	54.5	54	54.5	118,700
San Miguel Corp. B	63.5	63.5	63.5	63.5	122,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.33	110,000
Ayala Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.3	2,931,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	396,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.025	200,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	10,000
APC Group Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	400,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	550,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	40,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	400,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	100,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	100,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	18.75	19	18.75	19	140,600
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	42,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	60,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.02	1.06	3,015,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	10,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	11,800,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	300,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.14	490,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	600,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	70,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.68	180,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.2	7.3	7	7	33,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.02	1.36	116,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	25	34	25	34	5,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	8,500
Steniel Manufacturing	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	100,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.55	0.58	0.55	0.58	4,450,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	850,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	120,000
Mondragon Intl Phils Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	120,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN HLDGS. Corp. (Pdr)	25	25	25	25	9,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	52,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.1	6	6.1	2,508,000
Cityland Development Corp.	2	2	2	2	2,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.12	0.125	0.12	0.12	2,670,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,061,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.18	2.18	2.18	2.18	50,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	240,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	50,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.7	6.5	6.7	4,305,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	20,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	2,360,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	4,060,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.008	22,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	1,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	400,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	310,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.0028	0.0028	25,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	20,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	100,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	700,000

DISCLOSURES

PETRON Corp.'s Bataan refinery shut down its gas oil hydrotreater facility in the afternoon of Dec. 27 due to a leak observed at the unit's hot separator vapor and cold separator liquid heat exchanger.

* * *

THE LISTING of 26,553,949 common shares of Diversified Financial Network Inc. is set on Jan. 2.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Bank of Communications will hold a special stockholders' meeting on Feb. 10, 2004 at 4 p.m., at thw PBCom Training Center, PBCom Tower, Makati City.

* * *

OSCAR Hilado, director of A. Soriano Corp., bought 3 million shares on Dec. 23. This brings his total shares to 6 million.

* * *

ANSCOR Consolidated Corp., a 100-percent subsidiary of A. Soriano Corp., bought 500,000 A. Soriano shares on Dec. 23. This brings ACC's total shares in the company to 694,104,777.

* * *

LEISURE and Resorts World Corp. elected the following officers: Roberto Atendido, chairman and president; Geoffrey Uymatiao, vice president and treasurer; and Edeline Ramos, corporate secretary.

* * *

THE BOARD of Macroasia Corp. accepted the resignation of Gemma Santos as corporate secretary and elected Florentino Herrera III as her replacement.

* * *

SPI Technologies bought 300,000 shares at an average price of P13 per share on Dec. 23.

Compiled by Armin Adina, PDI Research

CURRENCIES

December 29, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.804246421	1.000000	55.546000
Japan	Yen	0.007484	0.009306	0.516900
United Kingdom	Pound	1.424883	1.771700	98.410800
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103584	0.128796	7.154100
Switzerland	Franc	0.641345	0.797448	44.295000
Canada	Dollar	0.615338	0.765111	42.498900
Singapore	Dollar	0.471477	0.586235	32.563000
Australia	Dollar	0.596357	0.741510	41.187900
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.133336	2.652590	147.340800
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.214448	0.266645	14.811100
Brunei	Dollar	0.4701	0.584522	32.467900
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.02033	0.025278	1.404100
UAE	Dirham	0.218974	0.272272	15.123600
Euro	Euro	1	1.243400	69.065900
Argentina	Peso	0.272626	0.338983	18.829100
Brazil	REAL	0.277518	0.345066	19.167000
Denmark	Kroner	0.134478	0.167210	9.287800
India	Rupee	0.017676	0.021978	1.220800
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.211672	0.263193	14.619300
Mexico	New Peso	0.071555	0.088972	4.942000
New Zealand	Dollar	0.519942	0.646496	35.910300
Norway	Kroner	0.118378	0.147191	8.175900
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013996	0.017403	0.966700
South Africa	Rand	0.120689	0.150065	8.335500
Korea	Won	0.00067	0.000833	0.046300
Sweden	Kroner	0.109788	0.136511	7.582600
Syria	Pound	0.018175	0.022599	1.255300
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023675	0.029438	1.635200
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000504	0.000627	0.034800

A WOMAN peddler shows Chinese traditional handicraft works in Shanghai. Chinese women no longer prioritize higher education when looking for potential partners, defying millennia-old traditions of putting value on formal schooling, state media said. AFP

China approves new banking laws

SHANGHAI—China's parliament has approved amendments to outdated banking laws that would allow further reform of the country's creaking financial sector, official newspapers said on Monday.

Drafts of the three banking laws were reviewed and approved by senior lawmakers at a meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, or parliament. They will go into effect on Feb. 1.

Among the changes include a small but significant amendment to laws that could herald the lifting of an eight-year old ban on banks trading stock and setting up investment trusts, the Shanghai Securities News said.

An amended "Commercial Law" offers some leeway to a provision stating commercial lenders are prohibited from domestic trust investment and stock businesses.

The provision was not deleted, as expected earlier, but the amendments state that banks should be allowed to trade stock in future should new regulations permit, the newspaper said.

"The breakthrough indicates the state has left some legal leeway for banks to conduct such business," the paper said.

China's "Commercial Law," implemented in 1995, was partly the result of a sweeping crackdown on excessive stock and trust speculation in the mid-1990s, after which the government segregated the banking, brokering and trust sectors.

Among other steps, Beijing set up an independent interbank bond market in 1997 to prevent bank money flowing into stocks through bond markets on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges.

But market conditions have changed since and China's efforts to reform a debt-laden financial system have prompted a call from industry players for Beijing to carve new business channels for banks hoarding $1.3 trillion in personal savings.

Beijing is also looking for ways to create fresh sources of funding for its cash-starved brokerages and investment trusts.

China's parliament has also approved changes to a central bank law and passed a new banking supervision law after the government set up an independent industry supervisory body in March, the newspaper said.

The amendment eliminates the central bank's erstwhile supervisory function and transfers it to the newly set-up China Banking Regulatory Commission.

"The formulation of bank laws will provide a solid legal foundation for China's reform of the financial and banking regulatory system and safeguard the secure, steady and efficient operation of banks and financial institutions," the newspaper said. *Reuters*

Japan's Toshiba struggles to recapture its old glory

TOKYO—Japan's Toshiba Corp., once the world's largest maker of notebook computers, is seen poised for major restructuring of its PC operations as it struggles to halt the division's flow of red ink and recapture past glory.

But analysts say Toshiba's priority should be on shifting resources to areas where it has a clear advantage, such as hard disk drives (HDDs), as a fierce price battle involving Hewlett-Packard and Dell has made profits in the PC market elusive.

Hit by aggressive pricing by the two industry leaders, the Japanese electronics conglomerate cut the earnings outlook for its PC and PC peripherals division twice in as many months this year, raising investor concerns about its competitiveness.

Toshiba, which held top spot in the notebook PC market for seven consecutive years to 2000, expects the division to post an operating loss of 21 billion yen ($196 million) for the year to March, a stark contrast with its initial forecast of a 22 billion yen profit.

As part of its effort to revive the once vibrant division, it plans to turn its PC business into a separate in-house company on Jan. 1—a step industry watchers see as a catalyst for far-reaching restructuring.

"When profits from hard disk drives are stripped away and the real earnings picture emerges, losses at its PC business will be more like 30 to 40 billion yen (rather than 21 billion yen)," said Yoshiharu Izumi, an analyst at J.P Morgan.

"That would leave Toshiba with no choice but to embark on fresh restructuring steps." To fend off price competition from HP and Dell, Toshiba said in September it aimed to cut its PC-related work force by 500, increase the ratio of outsourcing to 30 percent from 20 percent, standardize parts and lower the number of production platforms.

But the moves were seen as insufficient to turn around the PC business and Toshiba President Tadashi Okamura acknowledged it might need to do more.

"Those measures are intended to stop the bleeding, to keep the PC business from declining further. There could be an occasion to announce more radical measures," Okamura told reporters at a reception on Dec. 16.

Bittter pill

To better compete with HP and Dell, which have pushed it into third place among the world's biggest notebook PC makers, Toshiba needs a complete overhaul of its cost structure, analysts say.

"Drastic measures are necessary," said Hiroshi Yoshihara, an analyst at Merrill Lynch.

"Toshiba needs to raise the ratio of direct sales and production outsourcing to as much as 60 percent from the current 10-20 percent. It may also need to sell some production capacity to contract manufacturers and procure products from them."

Dell's strategy of direct sales to customers, high volumes and low inventory levels enable the No.1 PC maker to slash prices and undercut competitors while making healthy profits.

Another potential move for Toshiba would be to scale back its costly research and development, and outsource PC design, along with PC manufacturing, to overseas manufacturers.

That would be a painful decision for a company that developed the world's first laptop computer in the 1980s and takes pride in its technological prowess.

But it is a step worth considering as technical differences between competing PCs become less noticeable, making price the major differentiating factor, analysts say.

"Nowadays, you can't afford to say you don't need to follow rivals in price cuts just because you offer high-end models," said Yoshihide Otake, an analyst at Shinko Securities.

"You need to be able to offer reasonably attractive PCs at lower prices if you want to make a profit."

From DRAM

It is not the first time Toshiba has had its core business overtaken by low-cost manufacturers.

Japanese electronics conglomerates including Toshiba have been forced out of the global DRAM chip market, which they once dominated, after losing customers to more nimble foreign rivals.

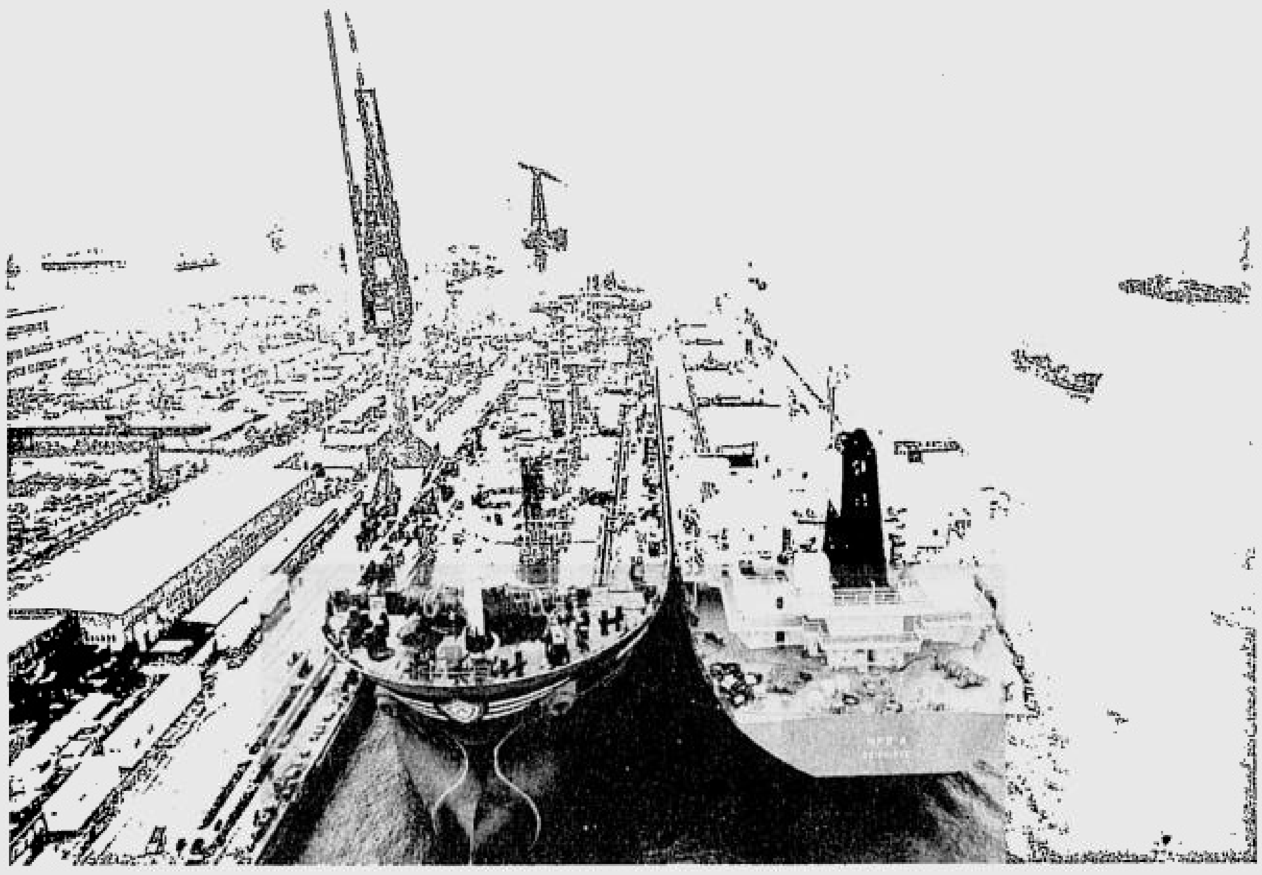
Toshiba announced at the end of 2001 that it would stop making DRAMs and focus on advanced memories. Along with South Korea's Samsung Electronics, it now dominates the global market for NAND-type flash memory chips, which are heavily used in digital cameras and photo phones.

While keen to see Toshiba's new restructuring steps, analysts say one answer to its PC problem is to follow precedent and gradually shift its focus to hard disk drives and other products in which it is more competitive.

"Just as Toshiba switched from DRAMs to NAND flash memories, it would make sense to shift resources to its optical disk and hard disk drive business even if the size of its PC business shrinks as a result," Merrill Lynch's Yoshihara said.

Toshiba is the only major maker of 1.8-inch HDDs—used mainly in handheld computers and digital music players—and controls nearly 98 percent of the global market, which it expects to grow almost eight-fold to 25 million units in 2006.

Although it does not release specific figures, HDDs are believed to be contributing to overall profits, which are boosted by the success of its flash memory operations, and Toshiba expects net profit for the year to next March to grow 35 percent to 25 billion yen, a figure analysts see as attainable. *Reuters*



CARGO ships are docked at a shipyard in Shanghai. Construction has begun on what is being billed as the world's biggest shipyard in the city, with operations expected to commence in 2007, state media reported Monday. AFP

Australia's Christmas top season sellers: lingerie and perfume

SYDNEY—Rising interest rates have done little to dampen the enthusiasm of the Australian consumer over the Christmas season with bargain hunters hitting the shops in hot pursuit of cheap electrical goods, perfume and lingerie.

Australia's largest retail group, Coles Myer Ltd., reported improving sales at its recovering Myer Grace department stores which are traditionally invaded by thousands of shoppers on Boxing Day as post-Christmas sales start.

"There is plenty of foot traffic through the stores, customers out and about looking for a bargain," a Coles spokesperson said on Monday, adding that perfume and "intimate apparel" were among the top-selling items.

Coles is one of dozens of retailers attempting to lure Australians away from the beach or the cricket with a blitz of television advertising highlighting post-Christmas sales.

Shoppers have squeezed themselves into the impossibly crowded stores of major retailers for traditional post-Christmas sales.

Luxury goods and electronic items such as DVD players are being keenly sought, although demand for more mundane items such as clothing and air conditioners was muted.

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) estimated sales turnover for Christmas met its forecast for 5.1 percent growth on last year, meaning the nation's consumers spent about A$27 billion ($20 billion) during December.

"Most retailers have been happy with the Christmas period," ARA Chief Executive Stan Moore told Reuters.

The mood to spend coincides with high levels of consumer confidence, unemployment at 14-year lows and wealth creation from a prolonged housing boom.

Discount store operator and Australia's biggest supermarket operator Woolworths Ltd., which expects annual profit growth of up to 15 percent this year, said it was on track for a robust Christmas season.

"It's been a good, steady, strong Christmas, in line with our expectations," Woolworths Chief Executive Roger Corbett said.

The period is a crucial one as Woolworths is locked in a battle with rival food retailer Coles which also reported a steady December.

The nation's biggest furniture chain and major electrical retailer, Harvey Norman Holdings Ltd., was less upbeat despite good sales so far, saying it was unsure it would meet earlier forecasts for its best Christmas ever.

"All categories were very strong, except air conditioning.

Air conditioning is not as strong as we would like it because the weather's been mixed," said John Skippen, Harvey Norman Finance Director.

Shares in most retailers rose on Monday. Woolworths rose 0.5 percent to A$11.66, Harvey Norman added 1.1 percent to A$2.87 and upmarket retailer David Jones rose 0.7 percent to A$1.38.

Coles was slightly softer, slipping 0.1 percent to A$7.52. *Reuters*

Brazilians launch hopes with sea offerings

RIO DE JANEIRO—At the turn of every year, millions of Brazilians literally pin their hopes on miniature boats that they launch into the ocean.

Loaded with flowers, soaps and bric-a-brac, the white and blue vessels are an offering to the goddess Iemanja, the queen of the sea, who receives their wish lists.

The tougher the times, the more boats that vanish into the waves in the first minutes of the new year.

While holiday sales this year were generally in a slump because of falling incomes and high unemployment, vendors of objects used in Afro-Brazilian cults say sales are booming.

Cults such as Candomble and Umbanda worship deities called Orixas, including Iemanja, who have spiritual dominion over elements of nature such as fire and water.

"Out there in the street you can see how activity fell, but here sales are going up," said Rogerio de Brito Ruas, a 33-year-old salesman in a shop called The Kingdom of Exu.

At the entrance stands a statue of Exu, the trickster deity who acts as a messenger between humans and Orixas and is often mistaken for Satan by the uninitiated because of his goatee beard, pointy ears and sly grin.

Loyal customer Edson Pedrosa, 45, added: "Every time people go through a crisis, they tend to seek a religion to be able to sail through the storm ... and the tradition of offerings to Iemanja is beautiful and tempting."

Rio de Janeiro, famous for its beautiful sandy beaches, hosts what city authorities say is the world's biggest party on New Year's Eve. Millions of people, including Iemanja worshippers, take to the beaches.

And it is in Rio that Iemanja commerce has really taken off.

Magic shopping mall

Ruas's shop is one of dozens inside a giant shopping mall in Rio stuffed with cult items.

The size of the "big market of Madureira," as the mall is known, and the many small shops scattered around Rio and other Brazilian cities like Salvador in Bahia state show there is demand for religious and magical items.

The price of the most expensive "offering" kits rarely exceeds $10 to $12, including top-of-the-range 1.5-yard-long (1.5-meter-long) boats. The most popular items, such as tiny mirrors, combs or soap for Iemanja to stay beautiful, go for less than $1, so even the poorest can make a wish.

Giant wooden statues of Orixas cram galleries.

Sequined cloaks and gowns hang in the shop windows along with beautiful headdresses, shiny tin helmets and drums of all sizes. Worshippers can buy those as offerings to the deities or as gifts for the priests.

Chickens, geese, goats and lambs can be bought for sacrifice. "Sacrifice is part of the religion, but how is it different from the meat consumed daily around the world?" said Pedrosa. "We only leave small sacred bits for the religious needs, the rest gets cooked and eaten in the normal way." *Reuters*

China boasts having largest population of mobile users

BEIJING—China, already boasting the world's largest population of mobile users, added another 6.54 million cellular phone subscribers in November, the telecoms regulator reported.

The country had a total of 263.48 million mobile phone users by the end of November, the Ministry of Information Industry said on its Web site www.mii.gov.cn, as cellphone subscriptions picked up in the second half of 2003.

China added 57.47 million mobile users in the first 11 months of the year, it said, for a monthly average of 5.22 million new subscribers in the market served by China Mobile and China Unicom.

The two rivals have been slashing prices to fend off competition from a low-end wireless service called "Little Smart" offered by fixed-line operators China Telecom and China Netcom.

The ministry counts customers of the cheap service—which has reached 32 million people in China according to a top equipment supplier—as fixed-line users. *Reuters*

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Sun Cellular embarks on Phase III expansion

SUN Cellular recently embarked on a Phase III infrastructure development plan by signing a US$100 million contract will Alcatel, the world's fastest growing GSM/GPRS infrastructure supplier. The move is part of Sun Cellular's on-track program to continuously expand its coverage and equip its mobile capacity to respond to the rapid increase of its subscriber base.

Sun Cellular's Phase III infrastructure expansion will set up Sun Cellular's mobile capacity to a level above-par the expected increase of subscriber base in the next 12 months. More importantly, this Phase III project shall ensure Sun Cellular's extensive coverage throughout the country including key, secondary and tertiary cities and areas to bring the total cellsite count to over 1,200 at the end of the program. The Phase III program shall equip Sun Cellular with the Edge technology that will enable it to provide high quality data service to its customers to meet market demands, as well as build a solid foundation for Sun Cellular's smooth transition to 3G networks in the future.

"Since we launched in April 2003, the number of subscribers that Sun Cellular has acquired has been more than expected. Because Sun Cellular offers subscribers cutting-edge services, we expect the trend to continue. With the Phase III program, we are preparing ahead to provide even better and wider coverage and service to the increasing subscribers. Moreover, the tie-up with Alcatel has made it possible for Sun Cellular to pass on to its subscribers, not only the state-of-the-art technology, but also its cost-effectiveness which should translate to lower SMS and voice call rates," explains Charles Lim, CEO of Digitel Mobile Phils Inc.

Under the Phase III program, which will culminate in mid-2004, Alcatel will supply, install and commission the industry-leading Evolium GSM/GPRS solutions, including radio base stations and mobile switching equipment, as well as Intelligent Network and microwave solutions. This is to further improve Sun Cellular's network coverage and quality and to accommodate the subscriber forecast for the period. Sun Cellular is also propping itself ahead for the next phase (beyond Phase III) to strengthen its position as a strong 3rd player in the GSM category.

Sun Cellular's choice of Alcatel to be its infrastructure partner goes back to its 5 years of fruitful alliance.

"We are confident that the cutting-edge infrastructure and services that Alcatel has provided Sun Cellular is one of the best in the Philippine mobile service industry. This is one of Sun Cellular's steps in furthering our goal to raise the standard for consumer service. We are more determined than ever to be the catalyst in the Philippine mobile phone industry to provide better services and choices for consumer needs. We are happy to report that the past few months have attested to this fact," concludes Charles Lim.

For more information on Sun Cellular, please visit www.suncellular.com.ph.

PLDT SPEARHEADS ITENSITY X

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., recently signed and presented to Baguio City Mayor Bernardo Vergara (left) his own website during the ITensity X event at the Baguio Convention Center. ITensity was the biggest information and communications technology event prepared for the 94th Baguio Charter Day. The event, which featured the launching of Cybermadness an exhibit, product presentations, games and a website competition, was sponsored by PLDT. Looking on (from left) are Fernando Marzan, PLDT senior manager, Baguio Business Zone; Councilor Edilberto Tenefrancia; Jesus Tañedo, PLDT Center head, North Luzon Business District; and Gilbert Villanueva of Airborne Access.

TORRES HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI BOARD, OFFICERS INDUCTION

Board of trustees and officers of the Torres High School General Alumni Foundation listen to the pep talk of the THS principal Dr. Romero Santos (right) after he inducted them into office. They are, from left: Henry Capule (Class '61), chair and president; Dra. Josefina Valdez ('54), vice president; Carol Delos Reyes ('61), secretary; Ronnel Samson ('78), treasurer; Cipriano Alacantara ('51), auditor; Marcelino Roxas ('49), press relations officer; Basilio Cruz ('63), trustee; Nene Ong ('68), committee chair; trustees Narciso Cayabyab ('65), Adela Roman ('65), Jaime Dela Vega ('62), and Carmelita Ching ('61), assistant secretary.

LATVIA'S NATIONAL DAY

Republic of Latvia honorary consul Robert Lim Joseph (center) is being congratulated by Republic of Ukraine honorary consul general Oscar de Venecia, dean of the Consular Corps of the Philippines, on the occasion of the celebration of the National Day of the Republic of Latvia, held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Ballroom, Makati City. With them is a special guest, Angel Ramos-Bognot, president of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies.

ProductFiles

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YOU'VE always loved those big, round eyes. Nor can you resist a day without giving him a hug or two. Yup, you've been bitten by the love bug - you're nuts about your mutt.

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Metro Manila Filmfest preems at SM

THE HEAD of the selection committee, Caloocan City Mayor said that this year's Metro Manila Film Festival could be the biggest, brightest and most successful yet. And the recent star-studded premieres of the festival films at SM Cinema lived up to this promise.

The industry's biggest stars glittered in Oriental glam at the red carpet preem of Regal Films' "Mano Po 2" at the SM Megamall cinema. Fans were dazzled by the presence of local showbiz royalty led by movie king Fernando Poe Jr. and wife Susan Roces, comedy king Doplhy and Zsa Zsa Padilla, action king Rudy Fernandez and Lorna Tolentino and multi-awarded Christopher de Leon and Sandy Andolong.

SUSAN Roces of 'Mano Po 2' and Fernando Poe Jr with former President Cory Aquino.

MARICEL Soriano, Dawn Zulueta and Aiko Melendez at the premiere of 'Filipinas' at the SM Megamall Cinema.

No less than former President Cory Aquino was also present, as was Senate President and wife Frank Drilon and Sen. Loren Legarda. Also adding glam to the event were Korina Sanchez, Armida Siguion Reyna and son Carlitos, Tessa Prieto Valdes and Tim Yap.

Regal matriarch Lily Monteverde had a grand time entertaining guests, which also included Judy Anne Santos, Carmina Vilaroel and Zoren Legaspi. Younger stars like Richard and Raymond Gutierrez, Angel Locsin, Alessandra de Rossi, Karylle Tatlonghari, and Oyo Boy Sotto were also present.

"Filipinas", Viva Films' entry to the filmfest, also gathered together a bright all-star cast constellation when it premiered at the SM Megamall Cinema. These included Maricel Soriano, Richard Gomez, Armida Siguion Reyna, Dawn Zulueta, Aiko Melendez and Victor Neri.

Meanwhile, fans trooped to the SM City North-Edsa cinema to meet and greet the stars of "Captain Barbell". Ogie Alcasid, Albert Martinez, Bong Revilla and Regine Velasquez gamely met thousands of excited fans at the preem of the action-packed film.

Other must see movies in this year's festival are "Crying Ladies", "Malikmata", "Homecoming", "FantasticMan" and "Gagamboy".

Catch the excitement of the Metro Manila Film Festival as it unreels at all SM Cinemas.

New Greenfield's Edsa Central Mall

THE INTERSECTION at Edsa and Shaw Boulevard is the strategic spot where Edsa Central Mall stands, serving as a convenient stop for thousands of travelers and shoppers. The complex has become Mandaluyong's commercial and entertainment capital. Today, Greenfield Development Corp has decided to refurbish its flagship mall, the Edsa Central, to give its customers a bigger place to shop and dine in. Opened this holiday season, the new complex will have three main features, a three-level shopping, entertainment and dining plaza connected to the MRT station, an open-air jeepney park with more shops and restaurants and surrounded by bargain stores, service centers and fastfood outlets, and a wet market. The new Edsa Central once again redefines the concept of convergence, convenience and value shopping.

Calabarzon scholarship search complete

FIRST Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities (FAIth) recently concluded its search for the Calabarzon scholars for the academic year 2004-2005. A total of 1,287 graduating high school students from 106 public and private schools in the Calabarzon area participated in the examinations. The FAIth scholarship committee was able to select 122 full scholars. The Calabarzon College Scholarship Program, now on its 2nd year, is one of the major projects of FAIth to contribute to the upgrading of educational standards in Calabarzon. Aside from the Calabarzon Scholarship Awards, FAIth offers more scholarship grants to deserving students through its General Admissions Test (GAT) scheduled on Jan. 24, 31, and Feb. 7, 2004. For inquiries about the GAT and other scholarships available at FAIth, call Vennie Sajorda at (043)778-0656.

Looney Tunes in Jollibee

GRAB the "Looney Tunes Back in Action" tumblers in any Jollibee store nationwide. With these new tumblers, you can add another item to your Looney Tunes collection. Just add P10 to any value and kiddie meals and upsize your choice of drink to avail yourself of a 16 oz. "Looney Tunes Back in Action" Tumbler. With an offer this affordable you can collect the tumblers in its four designs and attractive colors. So satisfy your thirst and add another Looney Tunes premium to your collection. This offer is until Dec. 31 only.

Valdes clan reunion set

The Valdes clan, originally from Pampanga, will be holding its annual grand reunion on Sunday, Jan. 11, 2004, at the Valle Verde 6 Clubhouse, 22 Beetle Street, Valle Verde 6, Pasig City, from 9:30 a.m. onwards. An estimated 500 family members are expected to attend this event that has been held annually since 1995. The clan would like to invite all relatives to attend this event, and foster camaraderie among the members.

Palawan still nature's best

THE LEGEND Hotel is offering a "Palawan Experience", a worry-free vacation package for families. For P6,999 net per person, the package includes a 3-day, 2-night stay at The Legend Hotel in Puerto Princesa, round-trip airport transfers, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Maximum of two kids below 11 years old are free of charge (sharing bed with parents) and with free meals and tours. The tour also includes a half-day city tour of the Butterfly Garden where colorful butterflies and flowers abound. Vietnamese Village, home of the "boat people" and the place to sample authentic Vietnamese cuisine, and the Kamarikutan Cape at Galeri, a souvenir shop and cafe surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature, Iwahig Penal Farm, and the Crocodile Farm and Nature Park. Package promo is valid until Dec. 31. For reservations, call 638-9256.

Christmas magic hits Isuzu

BUY THE awesome Isuzu Trooper Skyroof Edition on cash basis until Dec. 31 and get a Yuletide-wow-a whopping P75,000 discount. Visit your nearest Isuzu dealership now.

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

The economics of chronic disease management

CHRONIC diseases, which include diabetes, cardiovascular and pulmonary illnesses, are among the most costly of health problems. Since these are considered to be persistent and long-term diseases, long term treatment is also required to prevent the distressing and deadly complications of chronic diseases.

Although effective drugs are available which can treat or hamper the development of these diseases, they are usually expensive, posing a barrier on treatment compliance especially for the patients with an average income. Even the upper middle-class, who can very well afford high-priced medicines, are complaining of the cost it takes to sustain treatment.

Therefore, adequately addressing the chronic disease burden in our country requires an initiative to make healthcare affordable for the average Filipino patient. Pharmacoeconomics, a concept which applies the principles of economics to disease treatment with drugs, can help the medical community to achieve this goal.

The pharmacoeconomics program is an answer to the doctors and patients' clamor for more affordable yet equally effective, safe and bioequivalent medicines. Through pharmacoeconomics, medical practitioners will have alternatives to the more expensive drugs, with the goal of making sure that the medicine is taken by the patient strictly according to his medical decision and prescription.

Simply put, the idea of pharmacoeconomics is the use of affordable and bioequivalent medicines in the treatment of diseases. Bioequivalence means that a drug has the same effect with that of the originator product when given at the same quantity and dosing regimen. Therefore, according to the principles of drug bioequivalence, products demonstrated to be bioequivalent through clinical trial evidences can be regarded and prescribed as an alternative to the standard or innovator products and should also claim the effectiveness and other qualities of the drug.

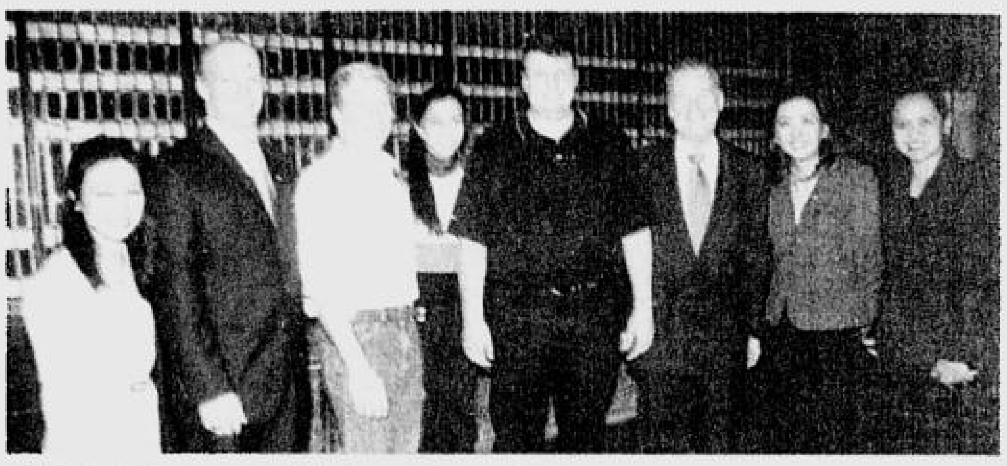
The introduction of pharmacoeconomics in the country will help solve an array of problems associated with chronic disease. Patients will be able to follow the prescription of their physicians. They are also guaranteed greater protection from their diseases due to the regularity of intake of their medicines and the more costly eventualities or complications can be prevented.

The idea of pharmacoeconomics is to help the patient able to take his drug for a longer period of time through a bioequivalent medicine for an eventual translation into optimum clinical benefits at a more reasonable cost. Although the beneficiaries of pharmacoeconomics program are the patients, the clinicians and other healthcare providers play a crucial role in the success of the program. Being an important element in healthcare decision process, doctors have to make sure that they prescribe a proven bioequivalent alternative drug to ensure treatment success.

The various divisions of Unilab, a leading pharmaceutical company in the country, is committed to helping improve the healthcare delivery to the average Filipino family by providing them with high-quality and affordable medicines for common medical problems. Its commitment is reflected in its slogan: "Mga gamot na umuubra sa presyong 'di sobra!"

PANA RECEIVES RECOGNITION

The Philippine Association of National Advertisers (Pana) received a plaque of recognition from the Associacion de Damas Filipinas during its 90th year foundation recently. Pana received this recognition for supporting Settlement House. Photo shows (from left) Pana executive director Dr. Nonie Azarcon, Manila City Mayor Lito Atienza and Settlement House president Elenita Nolasco.,



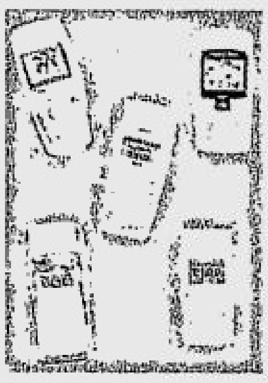
MANDARIN WELCOMES MOTOROLA EXECS

Mandarin Oriental Manila Hotel officials led by general manager Helmut Gaisberger (3rd from right) hosted a warm reception to Motorola's corporate vice president of Strategy and Business Development for Personal Communications Sector (PCS) and general manager for PCS-Southeast Asia Scott Durchslag (4th from right) during his official visit to the country. Also in photo are (from left) Alu Suarez, Mandarin's director for sales and marketing; Dave Thomas, Mandarin's food and beverage director; Thomas Maguire, Motorola's senior regional accounts director; Ellen. Suarez, Motorola's marketing manager; Marie-Jo Barles, Mandarin's director of sales; and Alie Sison, Mandarin's banquet sales director.

PHOTOLINE'S 38TH BRANCH

Photoline recently inaugurated its 38th branch at Robinsons Lipa. Established in 1980, Photoline has emerged as one of the leading providers of quality photo services. With branches strategically located from Luzon to Mindanao, the company uses state-of-the-art printing equipment run by its well-trained and friendly staff. Services offered range from one-hour developing and studio shots to the latest digital cameras and accessories. Next year, Photoline plans to open more branches to better serve its growing clientele who want quality products and services at everyday low prices.

Touch Mobile's phone kits for the family



THINKING of what to give your family this Christmas? Few gift ideas are as practical yet fun as a mobile phone to help you stay connected anytime, anywhere.

Touch Mobile offers an array of phone kits designed to fit each family member's lifestyle. Affordable and user-friendly, they make ideal gifts especially during this holiday season.

Try giving your youngest kid a Nokia 3315, priced at only P3,690, and let him enjoy creating pictures via its picture editor or have fun using its multiple SMS sending and personalized tones and graphics.

Let your teenage daughter compose her own ring tone, chat via SMS, or just play around with the picture gallery and picture editor of a Sony Ericsson T100 which Touch Mobile offers for only P4,390.

Gift your eldest child with a Nokia 1100, which offers SMS chat, group SMS, picture phonebook, and downloadable pictures and sounds, all for only P6,290.

Any parent will surely delight in receiving a Nokia 3530, priced at P7,690, or a Sony Ericsson T230, costing only P7,590. Both phones are capable of Touch Mobile's new service, Family Photo Messaging, and have an optional camera, polyphonic tones and color graphics.

Each phone kit comes with a free Touch Mobile's Super Family 64K SIM pack which has P100 initial airtime value, 450 built-in phone book and space to store up to 80 text messages. Touch Mobile also offers also a low P6.50 per minute call rate, proven nationwide coverage, and exclusive value-added services such as the Family Autoload, Home Info, and Family Circle. These great new phone kits are available at Globe Telecom Business Centers, authorized Touch Mobile distributors, sales blitzes, and Mobile stores nationwide.

Sampaguita at The Podium

THE SAMPAGUITA Performing Group will spread its musical message of love, hope and joy as it performs today at The Podium's lounge area.

A London-based children's ensemble of mixed Filipino parentage, Sampaguita is popularly known for its song and dance routines in the United Kingdom and continental Europe. Their musical repertoire includes Broadway and movie themes, while their dance performances include Philippine folk dances, Hawaiian ballet/tap, and modern dance.

Sampaguita, whose members range from 4 to 16 years of age, is the youngest group of artists ever to join Candid Records. The latter's roster includes international artists like jazz divas Stacey Kent and Clare Teal, and newcomer Jamie Callum.

Most of the children have, in fact, starred in West End theater productions. Jean-Michael and Jamesson Ipock, for example, starred in Richard Rogers' "The King and I", with Jean-Michael also playing Tam in Cameron MacIntosh's "Miss Saigon".

They are currently in the Philippines to promote their "Children of the World" album, a brainchild of Nieves Bates, managing director of Candid Records, proceeds of which will help underprivileged children. Main beneficiaries are the Knights of Rizal Orthopedic Trust (a registered charity in the United Kingdom, which supports operations of handicapped and deformed children in the Philippines, and the Asilo de San Vicente de Paul.

Distributed locally by Ivory Records, "Children of the World" consists of 8 heartwarming and joyful melodies like Paul Anka's "Puppy Love", Michael Jackson's "This Girl is Mine", "Tomorrow" from "Annie" and Vehnee Saturno's heart-wrenching masterpiece, "Palimos Po".

Choreographed and musically directed by Mischiel Solis-Ipock, Sampaguita will perform live today at 7 p.m. at the Podium's Lounge.

THE SAMPAGUITA ensemble

THE SAMPAGUITA Performing Group will be at The Podium today

CORNETTO BIG DATE WINNER

Congratulations to Crispina Hapalla of Zamboanga City - winner of the Brand New Volkswage Beetle from the Selecta Cornetto Big Date Promo. Hapalla got to drive her shiny red Beetle home after the awarding ceremony at the ABS-CBN Compound. Pictured at the turn-over are Tony Feria, marketing director of ABS-CBN Interactive, Crispina Hapalla and Via Reyes, assistant brand manager of Selecta Wall's, Inc.

mEB broadcasts Quiapo Mass

MERCURY Drug is a true innovator with its many firsts. Just this year, Mercury Drug successfully launched its Mercury Electronic Billboard (mEB) in historic Plaza Miranda. The mEB is truly an outdoor media marvel that illuminates the busy Quiapo day and night. Truly a sight to see when you visit the city of Manila or if you happen to be visiting Quiapo Church.

This New Year's Eve, Mercury Drug does another first, on the site of the Mercury Electronic Billboard, Plaza Miranda will be transformed into a venue of celebration. The New Year's Eve Mass of the Quiapo Church will be broadcast live on the mEB followed by other entertaining programs. The culminating activity is the New Year countdown and an animated fireworks display to awe the people of Quiapo. The evening of celebration would not be a festivity without food and drinks provided free to visitors by Mercury Drug and its business partners.

Here's a toast to Mercury Drug and its many firsts. A toast to the Mercury Electronic Billboard and its wonderful display of lights that continue to delight commuters everyday. Finally, a toast to all and to the New Year.

ProductFILES

Powermax's 2nd branch

PowerMax
HOME & BUSINESS BURGLAR ALARM
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PowerMax, a world-leader in home and business security systems, has recently opened another showroom at the MC Home Depot - Fort Bonifacio. This new PowerMax branch carries the complete range of high-tech security alarms from Visonic Ltd. of Tel Aviv, Israel. Visit the new PowerMax showroom at MC Home Depot - Fort Bonifacio and see for yourself what makes PowerMax stand out from other security systems. There will be free demos for those who are interested to install the PowerMax security system into their homes or offices. Aside from the MC Home Depot - Fort Bonifacio branch, you can also visit our other showroom at MC Home Depot - Ortigas. For more information, please contact Sequtech Corp., exclusive distributor of PowerMax in the Philippines, at 845-3444.

Santos G. Mena S.J.
PSALMS
for today

Sustenance for the soul

FOR CENTURIES upon centuries, the Psalms have nourished the faiths of both Jews and Christians. It is with great honor, then, that the Jesuit Communication presents a new volume of Psalms, composed by well-loved teacher and spiritual guide: Psalms for Today by Father Santos Mena, SJ. Father Mena, an institution of Xavier School, has compiled these "reconstituted" Psalms into a handy prayer book for those who wish to pray their life's struggles. These Psalms do not pretend to be Scripture, but they are inspired to by Scripture, and may perhaps lead us deeper into Scripture. A daily prayer guide is also included for those who wish to make the Psalms their daily spiritual nourishment. Allow these Psalms to nourish your soul, and lead you to the Bread of Life. Psalms for Today, as well as other books by Fr. Santos Mena, SJ are available at all Jesuit Communications outlets.

Jubilee Villas: a wise investment

AFTER selling out Phases 1 and 2,Jubilee Villas, a 35-unit townhouse project within a secured compound with swimming pool facilities and other amenities and located at 90 Banlat Road Tandang Sora, Quezon City, has recently completed five units of Phase 3. To date, only three units of Phase 3 are left for sale and available for immediate occupancy. Construction of another six units of Phase 4 will start soon. Each unit of Jubilee Villas, with an average floor area of 135 sqm., has three bedrooms, two toilets and bath, an attic, living and dining rooms, kitchen, a powder room, maid's room, a laundry area and covered garage. At the current price of P25,450 per sqm., Jubilee Villas is a wise investment to consider for your own house or to lease to a third party. Jubilee Villas is the latest project of Epoch Properties. The exclusive marketing manager, Zitro Real Estate, welcomes direct buyers and accredits licensed real estate brokers.

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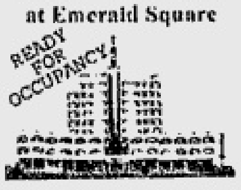
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LOT

LAGUNA

CABUYAO
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HOUSE & LOT

PARANAQUE

Hse & Lot BF Pque 7764856

PASIG

Kapitolyo 6br 637-7396

DE CASTRO SUBD 2Stry P1.8M LA321/m² FA271/m² 6Bdrms 2T&B Vic 8903461 loc 27

QUEZON CITY

5br 3tb Xav 3 Loy Hgts 0917-4815314 • 426-0543

LAGUNA

LAGUNA BEL-AIR LA132/m 3bdrms 2T&B FA84/m P1.85M Vic 8903461 loc27/25

MILAN CAMELLA HOMES 3Stry FA 210/m² LA 78/m² P1.9M Vic 8903461 loc 27/25

CONDO/TWNHSE

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12T/mo. or 3Yrs No Int. or 10% D.P. LIPAT AGAD 2-4BR 15min Fr Mkti 0917-8313226

MANILA

930T nr UST 0920-8309744

PASIG

ORTIGAS 1BR 520-0075

QUEZON CITY

Rush! Fernandina 88 100sqm 4.5M Neg 3br 2tb 0916-7069277

LOT

KALOOCAN

RAINBOW VILLAGE5 LA216m² P3,473/m² Vic 8903461 loc25

MARIKINA

FAIRLANE SUBD
350sqm@P5th nego
ST. BENEDICT SUBD
240sqm@P5th nego
GREENHTS SUBD, JP RIZAL
2lots 600sqm@P13th nog
0916-7807150/9418227

PASIG

METROVILLE SUBD LA 333m² P4,054/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

LOT

QUEZON CITY

LOYOLA GRAND VILLAS choice lots w/ view 426-5650•929-1832

VILLA ESPANA LA108.50m² P12,000/m² Vic8903461loc27

OTHER AREAS

TOWN & CNTRY HILLS LA240m² P3,125/m² Vic 8903461loc 27

BATANGAS

RANCHO VISTA SUBD LA613m² P2,284/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

TAAL BTGS nr Diversion Rd 6794m² P185.50/m² Vic8903461

BULACAN

SAN MIGUEL LA 4000m² P180/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

TOWN & COUNTRY LA 180m² P2,900/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

CAVITE

598m² P450T 09198761637

DON BOSCO EXEC HTS LA128m² P2,900/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

ST. CHARBEL DASMA 371m² P2,650/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

LAGUNA

SOUTH PEAK P5,000/m² LA240m² Vic8903461loc25/27

MEMORIAL LOT

Loyola Marikina 8 Lawn Lots 0917-4815314 • 426-0543

BULACAN

SAN MIGUEL LA 4000m² P180/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

BATANGAS

TAAL BTGS nr Diversion Rd 6794m² P185.50/m² Vic8903461

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

HOUSE

MAKATI

3br w/Grge P20T 589-9505

APARTMENT

MANILA

1BR nr P.GIL 5634007 5642878

ROOM & BOARD

Prj3 new 3.5T studio9137513

BUSINESS RENTAL

MALATE OFFICES 526-8048

LOAN & MORTGAGE

2% W/O TAKING CAR 3677523/24

BUSN DRS OFW 524-3197

FINANCING-EASY FAST VERY PRIVATE CONVENIENT H/L BUSINESS PERSONAL Gigie /Ernie 8903461 loc25/23

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

MITSUBISHI

99 Mdl Mits. Strada 99Acq P510K Good Condition 0918-9386294 c/o Mon

TOYOTA

'92 Corolla XE A1 cond 165Tneg DBO 09209111743

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

December 17, 2003

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. Contract Code : **Sp03.LSRP.VI-0004, Schedule II**
   Title : **Construction, Erection and Installation of 138kV Substation Equipment for Babatngon Substation under the Leyte - Samar Reinforcement Project**
   Location : **Brgy. Gov. E. Jaro, Babatngon, Leyte**
   Contract Duration **Three Hundred (300) Calendar Days**
2. The works to be completed by the successful bidder shall consist of furnishing all superintendence, labor, materials, supplies, tools and equipment (except materials and equipment specified to be furnished by TRANSCO), and constructing complete the substation and installing all substation equipment to complete the Construction, Erection and Installation of 138kV Substation Equipment for the BABATNGON Substation in accordance with the Plans and Specifications. The work also incudes site development, construction of new warehouse and guardhouse, etc.
3. The Approved Budget for the contract to be Bid is **TWENTY SIX MILLION FOUR HUNDRED ELEVEN THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED SIXTY ONE PESOS (PhP 26,411,461.00)** from the Internal Cash Generation (ICG) of National Transmission Corporation (TransCo).
4. Application for Eligibility is open to contractors with 115 kV minimum construction experience who have the legal, technical and financial requisites of the contract/ project to be bid with the following License and Registration Particulars:
   License at least "Category A - Specialty: Electrical Works"
   Registration at least "Medium B - Specialty: Electrical Works"
5. Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria and only Eligible Bidders shall be invited by Transco in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the contractor's offer to the contract under bidding subject to Postqualification before an award is made. Bid Prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.
6. Eligibility Documents and Forms will be available for issuance on December 22, 2003, at the Bids and Contracts Management Department, National Transmission Corporation, Ground Floor, Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City 1104, Telefax No.: 921-2308, E-mail rvalejandro@transco.ph, upon presentation of Letter of Intent, Contractor's License and a payment of non-refundable fee of PhP 800.00 per copy.
7. Deadline for submission of duly accomplished Application for Eligibility, Forms, documents and statements shall be on or before January 12, 2004, and shall be submitted at the registration office and address mentioned above. If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted.
8. Contractor, not yet included in the Transco's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility checking, are requested to register with the registration office mentioned above by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated at least once a year. A Certificate of Registration will be issued to contractors upon approval.
   - ✓ Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) business name registration or Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration certificate, as appropriate;
   - ✓ Mayor's permit and/or municipal license for the current year;
   - ✓ Taxpayer's Identification Number;
   - ✓ Notarized statement of the prospective bidder that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any Government or any of its agencies, offices, corporations or LGU's, including non-inclusion in the Consolidation Blacklisting Report issued by the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB);
   - ✓ Audited financial statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing, among others, the prospective bidder's total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of income Tax Return and Receipt of payment;
   - ✓ Contractor's License.
9. TransCo reserves the right to reject any application for Eligibility or all bids or request for registration without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
10. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) WINIFREDO SM. PANGILINAN
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Dec 23 & 30 2003)

BAGUIO WATER DISTRICT
"WE SERVE"

INVITATION FOR ACCREDITATION

The BWD is inviting interested and qualified suppliers, traders, manufacturers and those duly accredited by LWUA in the BWD accreditation of suppliers for the year 2004 for the supply of the following:

A. Pumps and Motors:
   - centrifugal booster pumps, submersible turbine pumps
   - horizontal induction motors/submersible motor (5Hp - 150Hp), etc.

B. Pipes and pipe fittings as Pb, HDPE, steel, G1, brass fittings, 0-rings, etc.
C. Chemicals
D. Electro-mechanical parts and accessories
E. Vehicle and vehicle spare parts
F. Water Meters
G. Office supplies/computer supplies
H. Operation and maintenance supplies

Interested suppliers are requested to secure Accreditation documents from the Purchasing Section, BWD Office, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P500.00 not later than March, 2004.

(PDI--Dec. 23 & 30, 2003)

BWD-BAC In-house

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CARS FOR RENT

ANGILYN RENT A CAR 749-88-74 09195887320

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CAR LOAN

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1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 6560140

1.5% w/o Taking Car 6567685

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CAR LOAN

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1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/75

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Security Agency T637-7396

RETIRE 2YRS 09189051567

Smart E-Load Ez way 254-8708

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

December 17, 2003

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. Contract Code **Sp03.NMSP.MI-0020**
   Title . **Construction, Erection and Installation of 138 & 69 kV Substation Equipment for the New Maco Substation**
   Location . **Brgy. Concepcion, Maco, Compostela Valley**
   Contract Duration **Three Hundred Thirty (330) Calendar Days**
2. The works to be completed by the successful bidder shall consist of furnishing all superintendence, labor, materials, supplies, tools and equipment (except materials and equipment specified to be furnished by TRANSCO), and constructing complete the substation and installing all substation equipment to complete the Construction, Erection and Installation of 138 & 69 kV Substation Equipment for the NEW MACO Substation in accordance with the Plans and Specifications. The work also includes site development, construction of new control house building, switchyard pumphouse, guardhouse, transmission line, etc.
3. The Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid is **SEVENTY FIVE MILLION NINE HUNDRED NINETY TWO THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED FIFTY EIGHT PESOS (PhP 75,992,758.00)** from the Internal Cash Generation (ICG) of National Transmission Corporation (TransCo).
4. Application for Eligibility is open to contractors with 115 kV minimum construction experience who have the legal, technical and financial requisites of the contract/ project to be bid with the following License and Registration Particulars:
   License . at least "Category AAA - Specialty: Electrical Works"
   Registration : at least "Large B - Specialty: Electrical Works"
5. Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria and only Eligible Bidders shall be invited by Transco in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the contractor's offer to the contract under bidding subject to Postqualification before an award is made. Bid Prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.
6. Eligibility Documents and Forms will be available for issuance on December 22, 2003, at the Bids and Contracts Management Department, National Transmission Corporation, Ground Floor, Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City 1104, Telefax No.: 921-2308. E-mail: rvalejandro@transco.ph, upon presentation of Letter of Intent. Contractor's License and a payment of non-refundable fee of PhP 1,000.00 per copy.
7. Deadline for submission of duly accomplished Application for Eligibility, Forms, documents and statements shall be on or before January 12, 2004, and shall be submitted at the registration office and address mentioned above. If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted.
8. Contractor, not yet included in the Transco's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility checking, are requested to register with the registration office mentioned above by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated at least once a year. A Certificate of Registration will be issued to contractors upon approval.
   - ✓ Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) business name registration or Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration certificate, as appropriate;
   - ✓ Mayor's permit and/or municipal license for the current year;
   - ✓ Taxpayer's Identification Number;
   - ✓ Notarized statement of the prospective bidder that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by the Government or any of its agencies, offices, corporations and LGU's, including non-inclusion in the Consolidation Blacklisting Report issued by the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB);
   - ✓ Audited financial statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing, among others, the prospective bidder's total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of income Tax Return and Receipt of payment;
   - ✓ Contractor's License.
9. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids or request for registration without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
10. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) WINIFREDO SM. PANGILINAN
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Dec 23 & 30 2003)

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
PNOC Energy Companies Bldg., Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1201 Makati City, Philippines
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO Tel No 893-6001-1320

PNOC

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC - Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project

2004-2005 ANNUAL CONTRACT ON EQUIPMENT RENTAL FOR BUSTOS, BULACAN NATURAL GAS PROJECT
EDC03-217

The contract duration is 1 year. The ceiling rates will be based on the prevailing ACEL guidebook

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o I M Corcuera) starting December 19, 2003 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos Two Hundred (P200 00)

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on January 9, 2004, 10:00 a.m. at the CAC Conference rm., Bldg 5 at the above address. Site inspection will follow thereafter.

Applications for Eligibility must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than 5:00 p.m. of January 22, 2004.

Contractor, not yet included in the PNOC-EDC's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening is requested to register with the said registration office by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated every year. 1) DTI Business Name Registration and/or Certified true copy of valid SEC Registration Certificate, as appropriate. 2) Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License; 3) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN). 4) Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate of Registration. 5) Notarized statement that contractor/firm is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any government agency, office or corporation, including, non-inclusion in the "blacklist" of contractors issued by CIAP. 6) Audited Financial Statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing among others, its total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt. and 7) Contractor's License, where applicable. A Certificate of Submission shall be issued to contractors upon approval

Sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at the above address not later than 2:00 p.m. of January 29, 2004 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter

PNOC - EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC

(Sgd.) Michael R. Rodriguez
Manager, Operations Services Division

(PDI--Dec. 30, 2003)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Priscilla Landig was extra-judicially settled by the heirs as per Doc #14, Page #03, Book #01, Series of 2000 by Notary Public Atty. Romarico Regio of Pasig City.
(PDI-Dec. 16, 23, 30, 2003)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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PUBLIC NOTICES

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ANTONIO L. ONG

a.k.a. **ONG CHING CANG**
now peacefully rests in the Grace and Goodness of our Lord on December 27, 2003 at the age of 77.

His loving wife **Concepcion**; children **Mike** and **Aida**, **Dennis** (†), **Carolyn** and **Lester**, **Anthony** and **Hydee**, **Carmina** and **Harvey**; his grandchildren and relatives request the pious renders to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel 8, New Building, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat Parañaque on Wednesday, December 31, 2003 after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

P/COL. ANDRES DINERO SEVA (Ret.)

former Chief of Police, Parañaque
& Asst. Superintendent Southern Police District

*Has joined his wife "**Lourdes**" and peacefully rests in the infinite embrace of our Lord on Dec. 28, 2003 at the age of 87.*

Caring and loving father of **Evelyn & Boy Marcial**, **Boyet & Batek**, **Bubut**, **Jojo & Violy**, **Tess & Mark Tenn**, **Dandy & Mafe** and **Milo**; doting grandfather to **Nice**, **Kate**, **Llewelyn & Lance**; **Arabelle & PJ**; **Joyce & Dianne**; **Brandon & Maya**; **Gian**; great-grandfather to **Camille**.

His body lies in state at Chapel-Faith, Don Bosco, Pasay Road, Makati.

Interment will be on Wednesday morning, December 31, 2003.

In memory of the man who made us what we are...

TEODORO KNAPP TIMBOL

Died in the Grace of our Lord on December 28, 2003 at the age of 71.

His wife Mely; children Max & Cynthia, Val & Daryl, Adrian, Anjanette & Jon and Meg and all his grandchildren request the pious readers for prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Tanguile Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park), Parañaque City.

Cremation will be on December 31, 2003 at the Manila Memorial Park Crematorium after the 1:30 p.m. Mass.

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies, and whoever believes in Me will never die.
John 11: 25-26

Leoncia Cruz vda de Puzon

who joined our Lord on December 29, 2003 at the age of 80.

Her beloved husband **Frankie** (+); children **Conrad**, **Nestor**, **Jimmy** (USA), **Paquito**, **Edgar** (USA), **Maribeth** (USA) and **Rolando** (USA); in-laws **Alice, Mye, Ana, Bing & Jonathan**; grandchildren **Cathy, John Paul & Miguel, Genebee, & Herbie, Jeymmie & Kyla, Kitty & Karl, Kevin, Keena & Kiarra, Nikki, Vincent & Cherise**, and **Richard**.

Her body lies in state at Sanctuario de San Jose Chapel, Buffalo St., Mandaluyong City. We request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Interment will be on Wednesday, December 31, 2003 at 10:00 a.m. at the Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City.

LUCIA C. YANCE

Peacefully joined
our Lord Jesus on
December 25, 2003
at 10:00 a.m.

Ashes will be brought to
Tayug, Pangasinan.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

OSCAR TUTANES NAGUIT, M.D.

Who passed away on December 24, 2003

wish to express our sincere gratitude to all those who comforted us with their presence, sent flowers and spiritual offerings, kept vigil with us, attended the funeral rites and in immeasurable ways were just there for us when we needed it most.

Margarita "Titay" Portugues Aranzamendez

June 10, 1915 - December 27, 2003
Peacefully joined her Creator on December 27, 2003 at the age of 88.

Her deceased husband Pedro (†); children Norma and Hermito Marfilla, Patrocinio (†) and Celia, Jorge and Nida, Efren and Lina, Freida and Perfecto Jose, Roberto and Mona; grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at #43 Agoncillo Street, Magno Subdivision, Barangay Sta. Monica, Novaliches, Quezon City.

Interment will be at Holy Cross Memorial, Quezon City, tentatively on Saturday, January 3, 2004.

Susan Grau Santamaria
LAGDAMEO

May 24, 1945 - December 27, 2003

"You have been planted... we are your fruits... You kept on searching for life...
And life found you... Love was all you can give... and how you gave it all..."

Thank you Lord, for lending Susan to us..

Willie
Clinton Hugh
Leslie Hans & Anne
Noreen Leigh & André, Alex & Axel
Thea Lynne

> **"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."**
> — 2 Corinthians 5:8

CLASSIFIEDS

Honda Cars Pasig
POWER OF DREAMS III

HCMI Power of Dreams Festival III opens in Honda Cars Pasig

HONDA Cars Pasig dished out a jubilant treat to its children's circles, frequent and fresh alike, via the Power of Dreams (P.O.D.) Festival III last Oct. 25 at the branch's showroom.

Galore of fun, prizes and surprises awaited children and parents/ guardians. These included educational and amusing activities in Great Explorations by AMA Basic Education featuring Bubble-ology, Tangram and Oobleck which helped kids answer questions in Science, Math and Logic.

For the artsy young brood, there was Art is Fun's scrapbook-making contest. Kids Caricature and Picture Magic featured souvenir poses of participants in space/cosmic outfits and background. Adults also enjoyed the Digital Driving Contest and computer games.

Photo shows winners of the Best in Costume contests: the Romulo brothers, Mark Albert (Darth Vader), John Edrick (Alien) and Kevin Carl (blue Alien) all in 1st place; Bianca Alcantara (in black dress) 2nd place; and Angelica Santiago (in lilac dress) and Jamie Sta. Maria (in white dress w/ stars) in 3rd place. With them are Honda Cars Pasig Customer Relations Officer, Ms. Chary Cruz (left) with hosts Apollo Abraham (center) and Marian Cabahug, and Marketing Services Assistant, Angelica Cabahug (right).

An entertainment-filled variety show capped the event with the awarding of prizes to contest winners.

2003 AGORA AWARDS NIGHT WINNERS
(L-R) Mr. Manuel P. Quiogue, President & COO, GMA Marketing & Productions, Inc., Mr. Jonathan Jay P. Aldeguer, President, Islands Souvenirs, Mr. Freddie Go, President Goldilocks Bakeshop, Dr. Placido L. Mapa, President Metrobank Foundation, Ms. Karen V. De Asis, Professor & Marketing Director, De La Salle University (Graduate School of Business) and Ms. Menlou Bibonia, Head Corporate Marketing, San Miguel Corporation.

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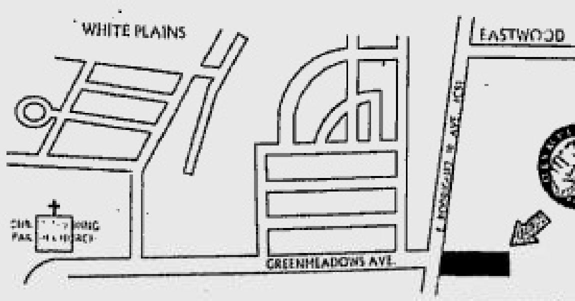

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P.O. Box 2102 MCPO Tel. No. 893-6001/1320

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC - Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

ENGAGEMENT OF A GEOTHERMAL WELLHEAD EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT TOOL
(GWERT)
EDC03-126

The Approved Budget is P3,481,500.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 1 year.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o R.A. Sison) starting **December 16, 2003** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Two Hundred (P200.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **January 7, 2004, 2:30 p.m.** at the Conference Rm., Ground Flr., of PNOC EDC's Building V.

Contractor, not yet included in the PNOC-EDC's List of Registered Contractors who wishes to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check screening is requested to register with the said registration office by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated every year: 1) DTI Business Name Registration and/or Certified true copy of valid SEC Registration Certificate, as appropriate; 2) Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License; 3) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN); 4) Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate of Registration; 5) Notarized statement that contractor/firm is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any government agency, office or corporation, including, non-inclusion in the "blacklist" of contractors issued by CIAP. 6) Audited Financial Statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions for the immediately preceding calendar year showing among others, its total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt; and 7) Contractor's License, where applicable. A Certificate of Submission shall be issued to contractors upon approval.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at the above address not later than 2:00 p.m. of **January 20, 2004** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC - EDC.

(Sgd.) Michael R. Rodriguez
Manager, Operations Services Division

(PDI - Dec. 30, 2003)

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Developer offers second homes to city dwellers

By Charles E. Buban

THE ASIAN financial crisis of the late '90s has wreaked havoc on the property market (as well as everything else) and forced most developers to put their projects on hold.

But while the rest are waiting for an opportune time, some ride out the storm, come up with innovative ideas, and eventually succeed.

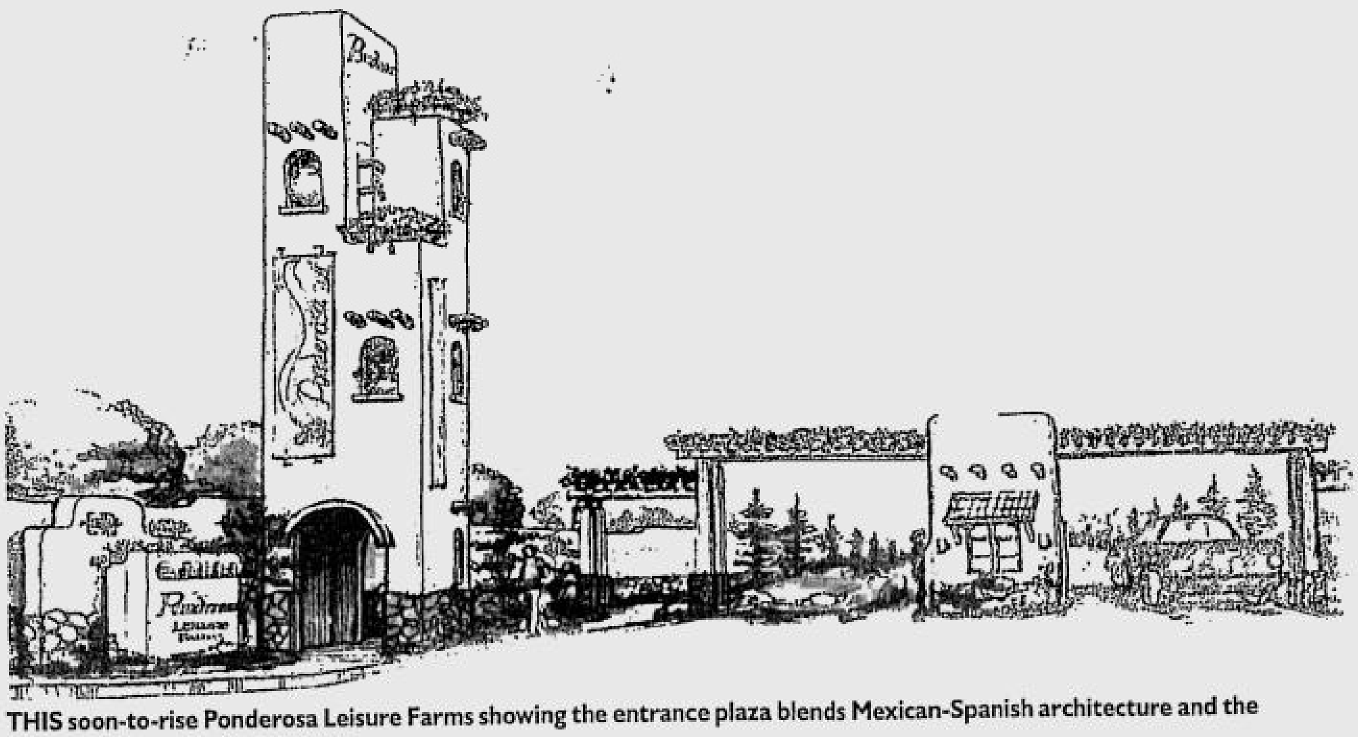
Foreseeing that the property slump will last for several years, Landco Pacific Corp. is one of these developers that decided to concentrate on joint ventures and try out a new product that its vice president, Alfred Xerez-Burgos III, has conceptualized.

The concept of offering "second homes" to city dwellers who wanted to operate their own modest-size farms without necessarily getting their hands too dirty in the process is an untried idea but as it turned out, it was an instant hit among a particular segment.

Gentleman farmers

"This was the idea behind the Leisure Farms on Diokno Highway in Lemery, Batangas: to produce gentleman farmers who would like to enjoy farming as a hobby without being a serious farmer himself," says Burgos.

To assist these gentleman farmers, Landco took the services of several groups in the area to help its residents with their farming requirements and take care of their farms on days they are away and working in Metro Manila.


THIS soon-to-rise Ponderosa Leisure Farms showing the entrance plaza blends Mexican-Spanish architecture and the property's booming flower farm.

A new market was created as a result.

But is there a trend toward lifestyle products? Burgos believes that when one creates something and catches a particular group's interest, it will likely start a bandwagon.

"As long as you offer products that suit a particular group's needs, there will be people who will be interested no matter what state our property industry is," Burgos explains.

Indeed, a number of developers patterned their projects after the Leisure Farms' model and went excellently well, despite the fact that the property industry is still reeling.

New market

"We tried a different approach—we created a new market by targeting those people who want to get out of Metro Manila from time to time to a place where they can breathe fresh air, relax in uncrowded surroundings and enjoy nature," explains Burgos.

The success of the first Leisure Farms led Landco to develop its second one, the Ponderosa Leisure Farms in Silang, Cavite.

This 43-hectare property owned by Ponderosa Farms Inc. offers 1,000 square-meter lots (average) to its clients who are looking for a garden community with residential resort features.

"Quite similarly with the first Leisure Farms, we're focusing on a particular segment that has the means and mobility to take the family out of Metro Manila and invest around P2.5 million," says Burgos.

Unique feature

But while the first Leisure Farms cater to farming, Ponderosa highlights another unique feature inherent to the property.

"When the owners first presented their proposal, we immediately saw the property's value: It already has a flower farm and nurseries growing different types of roses, which we can incorporate to our development there," recalls Burgos.

As the first Leisure Farms highlights Filipino Neo-Vernacular architecture, Ponderosa adopted a Spanish theme to create a romantic and artsy setting to go with the abundance of roses and bougainvillea in the property.

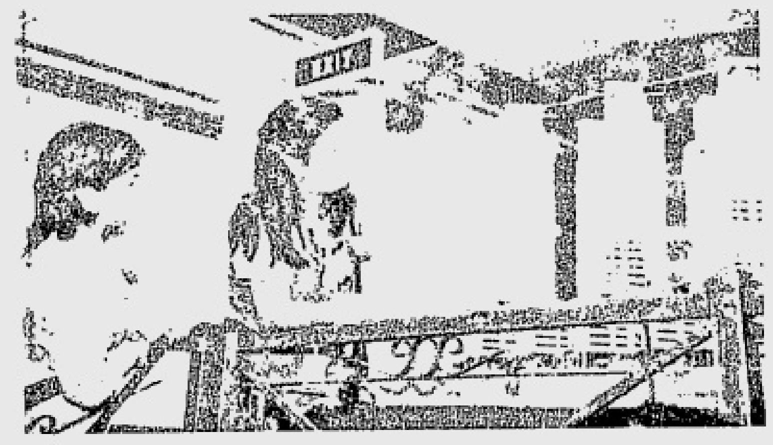
"Ponderosa is the first development that combines a garden community with residential resort features—an ultimate in country living in terms of quality of location, development and lifestyle activities," Burgos describes.

Back to nature

Burgos notices that more and more people are looking for a place where they can go back to nature and appreciate God's creations.

This particular trend was very evident in the US, Burgos relates, when a lot of young entrepreneurs—mostly products of the dotcom boom era—bought pieces of property outside their city and put up small ranches, or vineyard, or anything that's closer to nature and far from the cityscape they have grown accustomed to," he says.

"This is the same lifestyle Landco is bringing in and as a developer, we are proud to start and popularize such a concept," Burgos adds.


'SHARING THE LIFE' PARTY FOR COLUMNS' BUYERS
Property specialist Michelle Villseran, left, of the Community Innovations Inc. shows guest Teri Swager the first-rate features of The Columns, Ayala Avenue, a condominium complex offered by CII, an Ayala Land subsidiary, Swager was among the delighted buyers and guests at the Streetlife in Glorietta 3.

Laguna Suites feature kitchen, bath showcases

THE SEASON of gift-giving continues at The Residences at Greenbelt, Ayala Land's luxurious new condominium towers, which raise the bar for urban living to a higher level with a delectable choice of premier kitchen and bath showcases in the Laguna Suites.

In the spirit of the season, Ayala Land is pleased to offer even more flexible payment schemes for these prime three-bedroom units.

Cleverly designed

These homes in the sky are regular in shape which is an asset in space management, interior design, and feng shui principles. They are cleverly designed without corridors or hallways, ensuring that every square meter of space is highly valued. They feature the broadest balconies available at The Residences at Greenbelt—allowing for the greatest enjoyment of the Makati skyline and the lush lifestyle of the Greenbelt scene.

The interiors of the Laguna Suites offer three bedrooms, each with a private adjoining bath, and a wide living room that leads to the balcony. A kitchen wide enough to host a daily dining table adjoins a comfortable room for the house help, complete with its own bathroom and storage space. The master bedroom has a large walk-in closet while the master bathroom features a built-in tub.

To fully realize the potential of these prime units, Ayala Land is giving buyers the gift of having either a sleek and contemporary kitchen showcase, or an exquisite designer master's toilet and bath.

The kitchen showcase fits the Laguna Suites' kitchens with professional-quality appliances: a built-in hob, range oven and range hood from German appliance leader Miele, and a Fisher & Paykel refrigerator from the respected New Zealand brand.

The designer master's toilet and bath fulfills the desires of the modern lifestyle in which the bathroom becomes a place of beauty, relaxation and pleasure, with fixtures and finishes from the finest European brands Duravit, Hansgrohe and Hoesch—some of which feature the designs of the acclaimed Philippe Starck.

Flexible payment options

From the 7th floor to the 20th floor, Laguna Suites can now be financed with 20 percent down payment and 80 percent payment over 36 or 48 months or with 10 percent down payment and 90 percent payment over 60 months.

The new 15 percent down payment, 15 percent over 48 months, and 70 percent upon turnover is also available for the Laguna Suites. These new options complement existing terms of cash in 30 days, cash in 60 days and bank financing.

Epitomizing urban living

Indeed, The Residences at Greenbelt epitomizes urban living. Beginning with the 48-story Laguna Tower, the three towers of The Residences at Greenbelt embody the summit of contemporary living, with luxuries and features befitting those at the top of their game.

The Residences is an organic part of the verdant and vital Greenbelt commercial center, recently awarded the Urban Land Institute Award for Excellence, the Oscar of the land use industry, for beauty of architecture and design, financial viability, community acceptance and relevance for the future, consistent with the institute's mission of responsible land development. The Residences at Greenbelt continues this vision as the only residential property available to own within Ayala Center itself.

Thankful for the year that was

BUILDING DREAMS

By Alexis A. Acacio

AS I write this last column for the year 2003, many things have occurred to me regarding my thoughts about the real estate industry in our country. I am really thankful for our dear readers who had followed most, if not all, of our articles in this section. I have received comments, suggestions, questions and praises as short as one sentence and as long as five pages of real estate stories and inquiries.

It was a very good year for we have seen brisk sales of residential as well as commercial property. We have seen many malls being built, new schools being opened and public infrastructure being completed.

I have looked at the e-mail that I have received from our readers throughout the year and sorting the information that I have, the patterns that I see are more on their concern about interest rates, projects not being completed and design specifications not being followed. The results of my "data mining" regarding most of our readers' concerns are:

- **On Projects Not Being Completed**—Many of the e-mail that I have received were concerned about buying real estate that will not be completed on the scheduled promised date. Most fear that when they let go of their money, they will have nothing left but a contract that is purely paper and not the physical real estate that they expect.

My Advice—Buy only from developers and builders that you can trust. This means checking on the past projects that they have built and making sure that they were completed on time and within the expected quality. You can do this by asking the present occupants of the completed units on how the builder did the job. You can ask the basic questions of 1) Quality—Is the structure well made and appealing to the end user? 2) Delivery—Was the project completed on time? and, 3) Cost—Was the project completed within budget?

If it is a subdivision or a condominium that you are considering, make sure that the project has license to sell.

- **On Interest Rates Shooting Up**—A sudden increase in interest rate was one of the biggest fears of our readers. I am sure that they still remember the 1997 Asian financial crisis in which interest rates suddenly surged from about 15 percent to as high as 30 percent bringing many pieces of property to foreclosure.

My Advice—Thanks to the very creative banks and financial institutions. You now have the interest rate protection that banks offer. If you would want to be protected against a sudden increase in interest rates, take out a loan with a fixed interest rate of about five years. Some banks even offer a fixed rate for as long as 10 years. Of course you will have to pay a little more but the protection against interest rate surges can be very beneficial to you. This is a very common financing strategy for fixed income earners.

- **On Legal Documentation**—Many of our readers fear the dreaded paperwork that goes along with a real estate sale or transaction. They feel that they are ill equipped when it comes to documentation.

My Advice—Congratulations for being honest. Most of us do not know how to handle real estate documentation. That is the reason we have legal counsels and real estate professionals. Ask them to do it for you.

- **On Selecting Their Home**—Many of our readers fear that they would make the mistake of buying something that they do not really want. A lot of them fear being pressured by sellers to make a down payment on a property even though they are not yet fully decided on buying.

My Advice—Always remember that as a buyer, you are the boss and you will decide on what type of property to buy, when to buy it, and how to pay for it. Get as much advice from real estate professionals as you can and read technical information. Remember that a house will probably be the biggest purchase in your entire life so it is important that you take your time.

- **On Selecting the Best Location**—Many of our readers had fears on not being able to buy on the best location. They were often confused when they were faced with too many choices.

My Advice—Follow the simple rules of site selection and understand your real needs, wants and, most of all, what you can afford. There is also no such thing as the perfect location. Most of the time, we have to compromise some of our wants in order to give in to our more important priorities.

These were most of the concerns of our real estate end-users. Designers, planners, builders, developers and real estate professionals can make the necessary steps to further enhance their technical and customer support activities.

The year 2003 was a good real estate year. We hope that we will continue to receive more of God's blessings for the year 2004. Have A Wonderful New Year to All !!!

E-mail the author at aaacacio@pacific.net.ph

James Hardie Philippines introduces HardiSenepa

JAMES Hardie Philippines Inc. has come up with a new addition to its line of fiber cement building solutions—HardiSenepa fascia boards.

Considered the "hidden" part of construction, fascias serve as the vermin and the elements from seeping into the house through the eaves. Esthetics-wise, fascias draw attention to the elaborate roof designs favored by Filipino homeowners and designers.

Improved version

HardiSenepa is the improved version of the company's old senepa products, which had become scarce in hardware stores. "This was mainly because at 12 feet, the product would not fit most hardware store racks, leaving retailers no choice but to discontinue carrying it," brand manager Lei Punsalang explained.

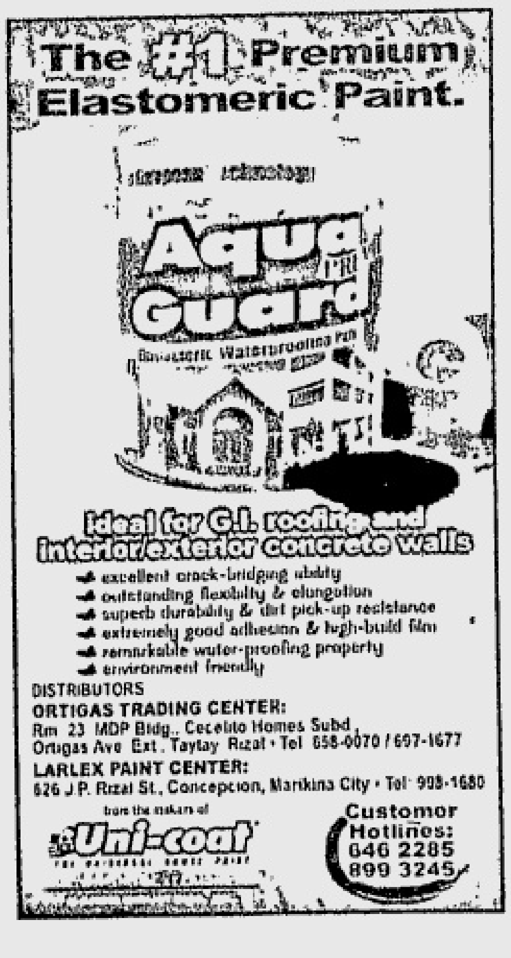
Further, the company was able to identify several housing projects, as well as dealers, that used the thinner and cheaper HardiFlex cut into senepa sizes for their fascias. The practice was also noted among homeowners.

At eight feet and in two thicknesses, HardiSenepa is a lighter, shorter and more affordable version of its predecessor. The 9-mm thick HardiSenepa comes in widths of eight and 10 inches while the 12-mm version is available in 10- and 12-inch widths, to meet the different fascia requirements of housing types in the country. For example, the thinner senepa is more appropriate for a low-rise structure, Punsalang pointed out.

Guarantee

Like the rest of the Hardie product line, Hardie Senepa fascia boards are guaranteed not to buckle, rot, warp, burn or be affected by termites. They are manufactured in compliance with environmental standards and are asbestos free. To complete a house's look, HardiSenepa can easily be cut to the desired size by hand or power saw and is ready for painting or staining with standard latex paints.

"Its durability and affordability make it the senepa 'na walang katabla'" (without equal). HardiSenepa is truly the ultimate in durablem competitively priced planks for attractive and long-lasting fascias," Punsalang said.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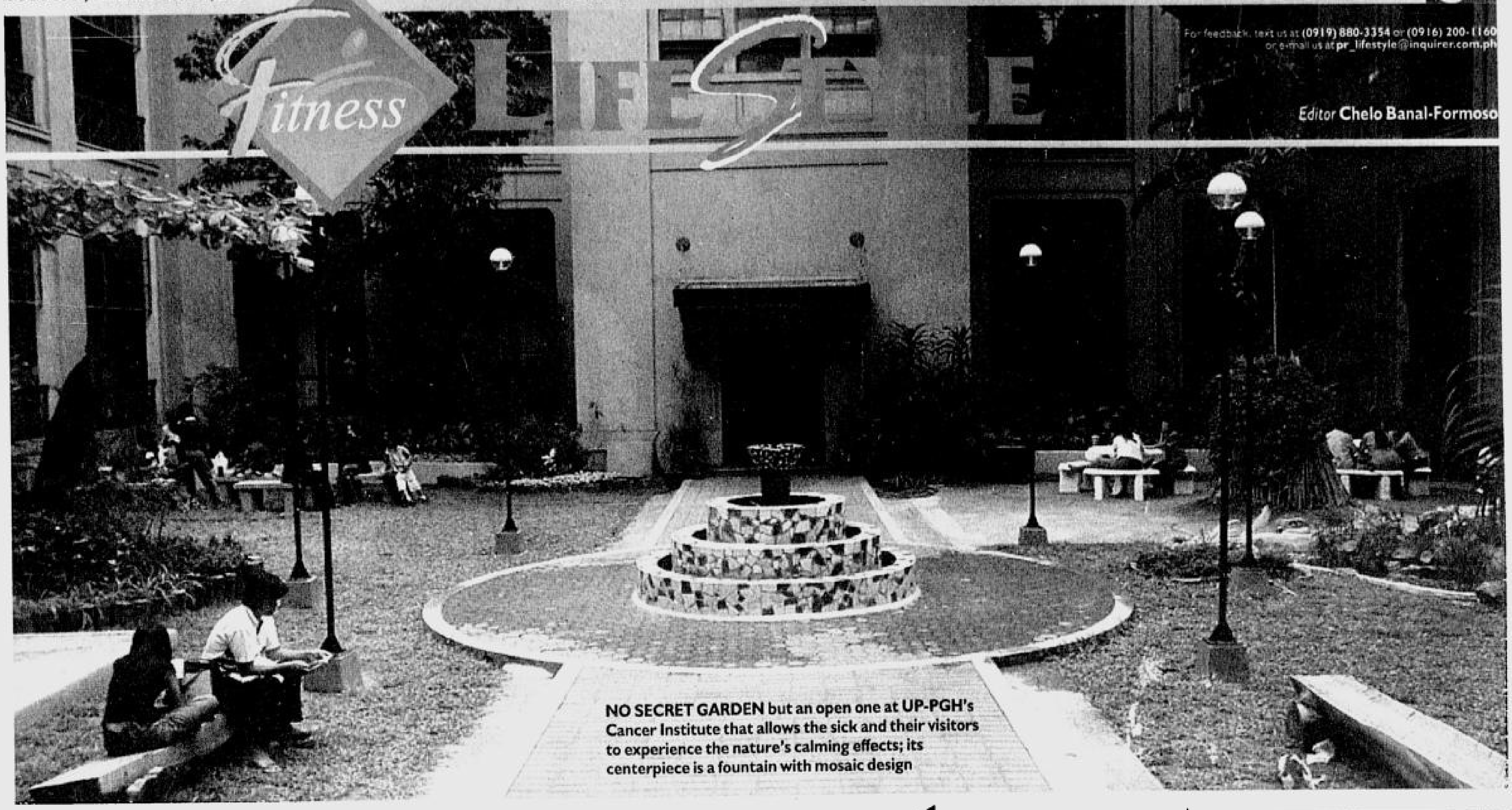
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso



NO SECRET GARDEN but an open one at UP-PGH's Cancer Institute that allows the sick and their visitors to experience the nature's calming effects; its centerpiece is a fountain with mosaic design

Garden of good and healing

Therapeutic green areas are a part of progressive methods of treatment around the world

Text by Rowena C. Burgos
Photos by Randy Hormillosa

THE HEALING power of plants comes as no surprise to gardeners. After all, we've been using our gardens for years as places to unwind and release the day's tension. All it takes is a leisurely stroll through a yard, pausing to snip a faded rose here and straighten an orchid there, to put our blood pressure back to normal.

Dr. Cecilia A. Ladines-Llave, chair of the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital Cancer Institute, has taken the concept a step further. She has helped improve the atrium garden of the Cancer Institute, where she sees patients and holds therapy sessions.

Windows and doors of treatment wards and out-patient clinics open to the healing garden, which has aglaonema, orchids, ferns, bromeliads, banca, amaryllis, *kamuning*, Chinese jasmine, *sampaguita*, *rosal*, fishtail, bougainvillea, Orlando, oregano, *gumamela*, *milflores*, and eucalyptus, and mango, santol and umbrella trees. The garden's centerpiece is a fountain with a mosaic design that adds restful splashing sounds.

The 700-sq m garden offers patients, staff, families and visitors space to relax in a quiet, natural setting. People get a chance for a few minutes of revitalization in such a serene place. The Cancer Institute treats 28,489 patients annually.

"Being close to nature or experiencing the relaxing effects of nature gives rise to positive thoughts. That's why therapeutic gardens have been a part of progressive methods of treatment around the world," says Dr. Llave, a gynecologic oncologist or specialist in cancers related to women's genital tract.

Studies have shown a link between a patient's physical environment and his ability to manage pain and heal. Promoting the harmonious balance between body and mind, the garden is designed to stimulate a person's visual, auditory and olfactory senses through the choice of plants, sound and color. "The garden works in tandem with western medicine, imbuing it with beauty, serenity and a more holistic approach," Dr. Llave says.

Rehabilitation

When Dr. Llave assumed her post in 2001, the Cancer Institute's 65-year-old, three-story building was being repainted. It was initially rehabilitated in 1993 during the term of Dr. Antonio Villalon, with the help of the Andres Soriano Foundation.

Dr. Llave noticed the atrium garden needed improvement as well. Most plants were already dry and some areas were bare. The garden's drainage was clogged causing the atrium to be flooded for days after heavy rains.

Since the institute does not have funds for garden improvement, Dr. Llave sought the help of her neighbors, Tony and Tita Perez. Not only did they donate funds and obtain landscaping services from Evelyn Real of ABC Gardens Company but they also established the Cancer Institute Garden Club with Drs. Llave, Elmer Santos, Arnold Liwag, Doris Benavides, Salvador Villanueva, Anselmo Trongco, Ben Vista and Janet Herrera.

The club converted a 100-sq m deck on the second floor into a greenhouse with pharmacological plants and a nursery for seedlings. Bamboo trellises were put up at the South entrance garden. Vacant areas in the periphery of the building were developed into miniature gardens.

The club plans to construct a trellis in the front garden on the Padre Faura Street side. Hanging plants and capiz lamps will be

GARDEN/ C4

CENTURY-OLD *acacia* tree in front of the Cancer Institute's Padre Faura Street entrance

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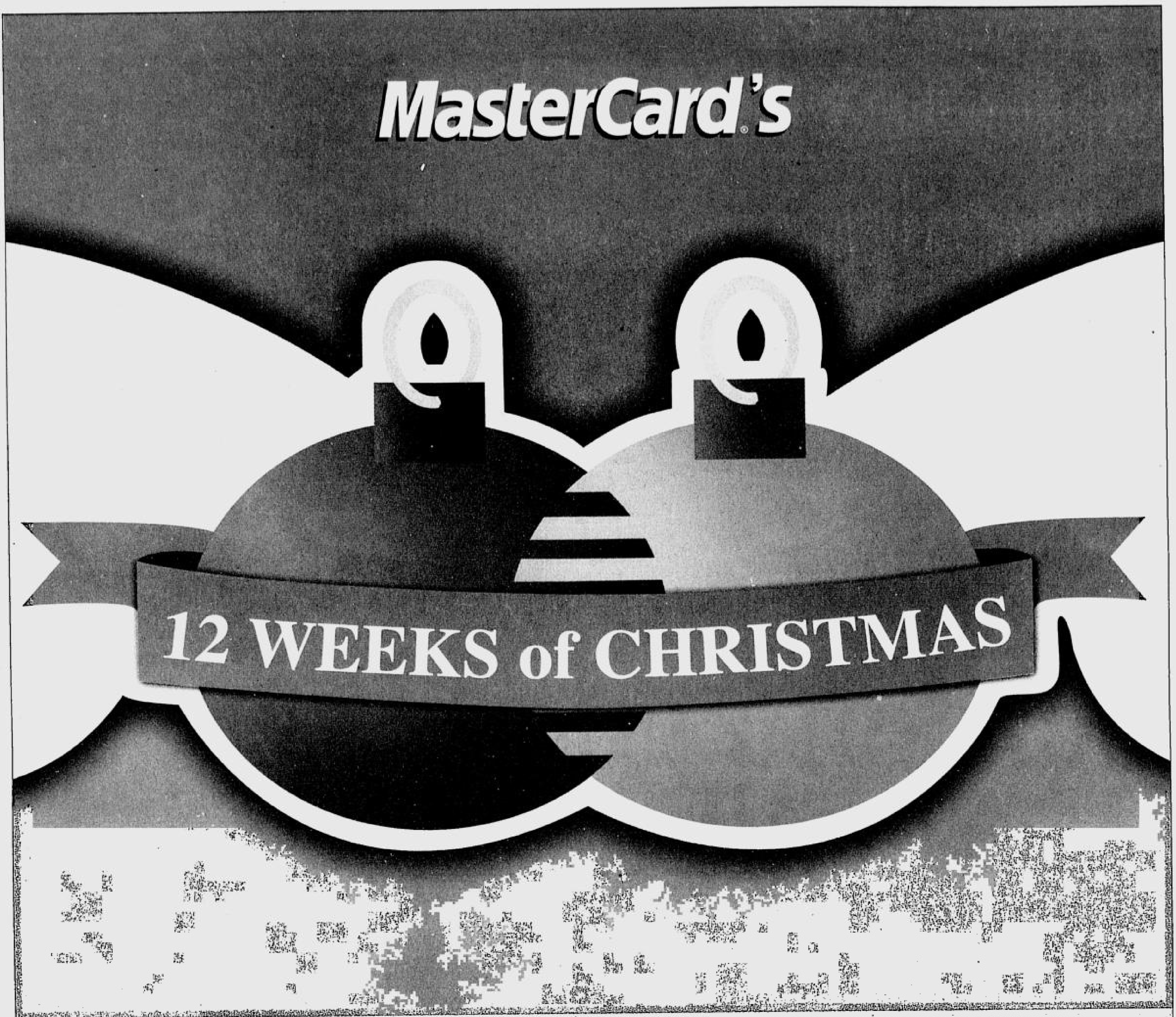

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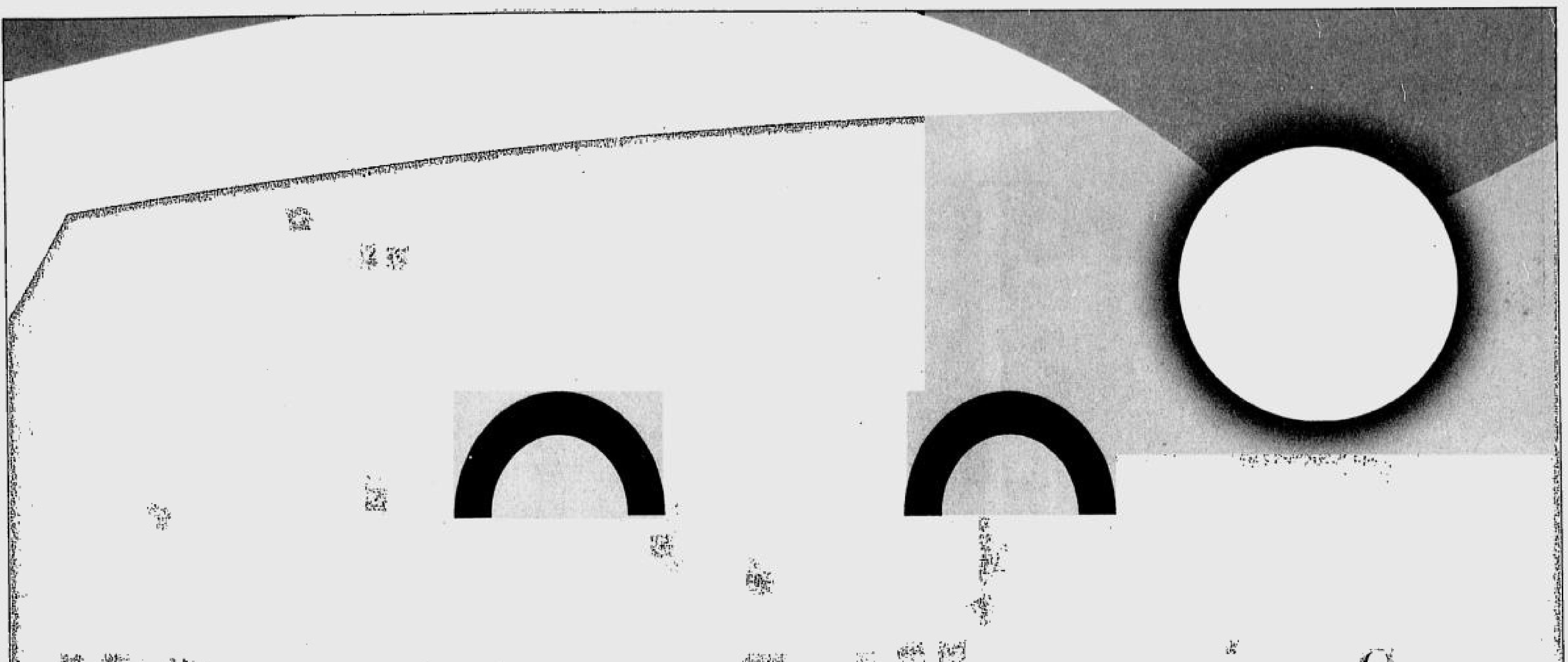

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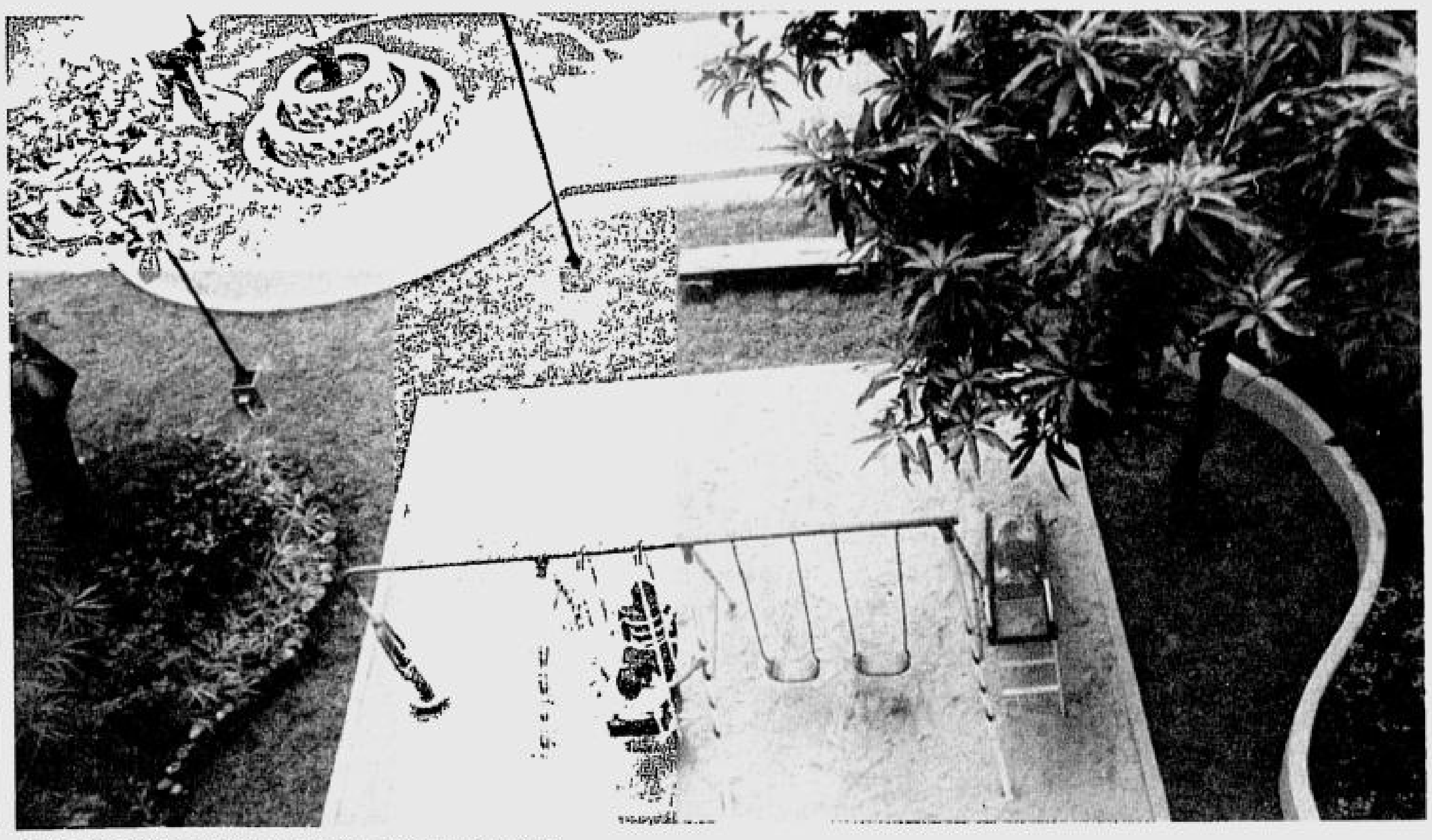

THE GARDEN'S playground with swings and a slide

Garden of good and healing

From page C1

placed near the century-old *acacia* tree. Additional lamp posts will be put up in different corners of the garden. A wishing well will also be constructed.

Fundraiser

Pose for a Cause was the club's first fundraiser. It was spearheaded by the Perezes and Dante Silverio, businessman and president of the Artists Guild of the Philippines.

Since then, the Rotary Club of Muntinlupa had offered to help and landscapers C.V. Lazaro and Ben Santiago provided their services for free. The Los Baños Orchid Society donated plants while Denise Celdran funded the fountain's construction.

"If only other hospitals could put up such a garden, that would help their patients recover or brighten up their day. If you don't have enough funds, just ask people to be part of your program. There are many who are willing to help," says Dr. Llave.

Venue for workshops

One of the institute's objectives in putting up a garden is to provide a venue for healing workshops in visual and performing arts, meditation, music therapy, aroma therapy, exercise, yoga, dance, look good-feel good programs, horticulture and storytelling.

"Part of the reason I initiated the garden's improvement was to have a serene setting for patients," Dr. Llave says.

Now, if only they can get strong enough to help in the weeding as well.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph

DR. Cecilia Llave, chair of UP-PGH Cancer Institute

Studies have shown a link between a patient's physical environment and his ability to manage pain and heal

PGH
Breast Care Center
2nd Floor
Cancer Institute Building

SOUTH entrance garden

Christmas Medley

The Grinchmas
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Carousel Court, Level 2

Christmas Puppet Stories
Art Workshop & Storytelling
December 24, 2pm
December 26 - 28 & 30, 2pm
Carousel Court, Level 2

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Dec. 23-28, 2pm - 5pm
Carousel Court, Level 2
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FAQs (frequently asked questions)

I applied for individual membership and was required to undergo a medical evaluation since I am over 41 years old. Will the results of this exam determine the benefits coverage I am entitled to and could it possibly lead to the denial of my application?

For standard packages, medical evaluation (ME) is done to determine the current health status of an applicant. In the event of any "finding", particularly the presence of a pre-existing illness, that specific illness will be excluded from coverage. ME however is not a ground for membership application denials.

Meet your MEDICard Team

Dr. Joseph Albert Abijay is a recent addition to MEDICard's roster of accredited specialists. Dr. Abijay is based at the World Citi Medical Center (WCMC), formerly know as QCMC. He finished his studies in Medicine at UERM-MMC and specializes in the field of Neurology. For your consultation needs, visit his clinic at Room 210. Dr. Abijay's clinic hours are from 10 AM to 12 noon every Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and from 1 to 4 PM every Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Members may now get their needed medical services at Prime Care Options (clinic) located at the 2/F Nova Mall Plaza, Quirino Highway in Novaliches, Quezon City. One of the clinic's accredited medical providers is **Dr. Jose Angelito De La Cruz.** Dr. Dela Cruz is a Medicine alumnus of the University of Santo Tomas who specializes in Internal Medicine. Dr. Joey, as he is also commonly referred to subspecializes in Pulmonology. He took his residency training for the latter at the Lung Center of the Philippines. To set an appointment, call Dr. De La Cruz at 930-0725.

Dr. Josefina Fleischner or Doktora, as she is frequently called, began her medical career after finishing Medicine at UERM-MMC. Thereafter, she took residency training for Pediatrics and has gained to date, more than 19 years of clinical experience. This, coupled with her genuine motherly love like the one she has shown for her three children, makes Doktora an ideal pediatrician. For your consultation needs, visit her clinic at Room 118 of the Biñan Doctors Hospital located at Platero, Biñan, Laguna. Her clinic is open every Thursdays from 2 to 4 in the afternoon.

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on availment of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

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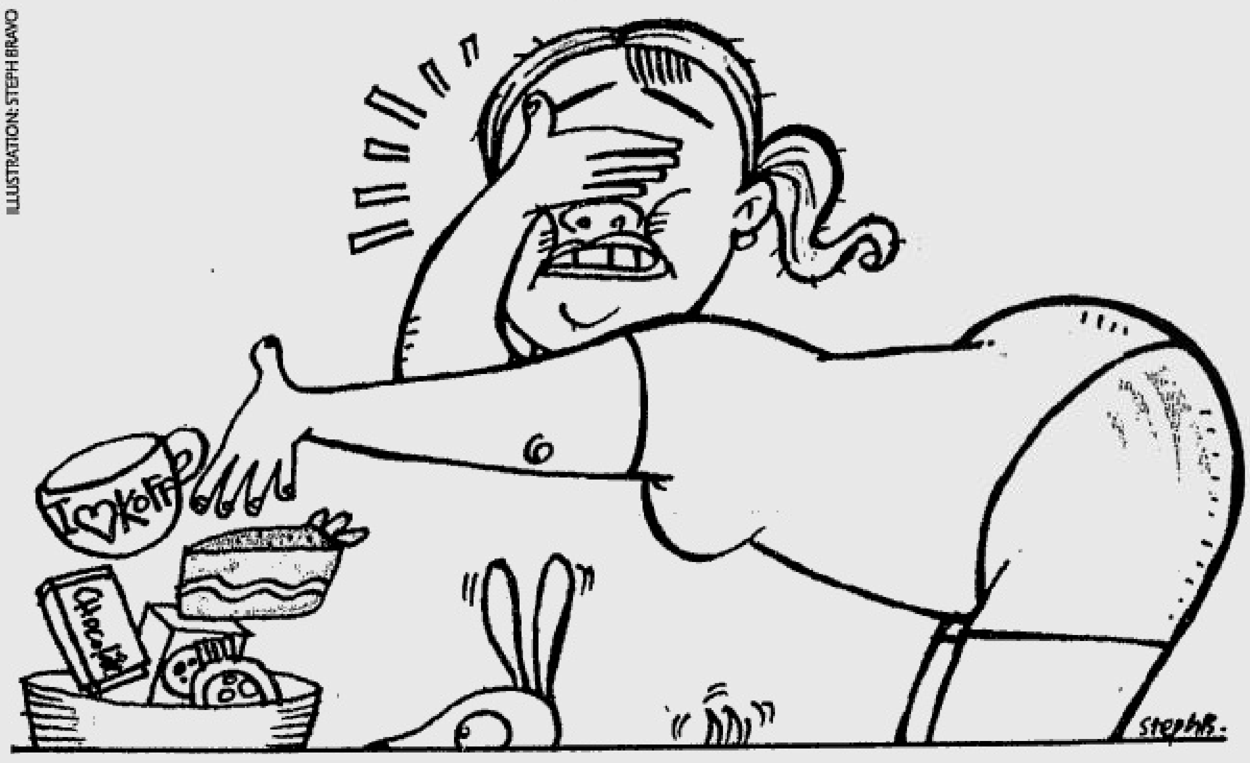

Make small changes for big results

Devise a system to become 'inefficient' with your activities of daily living and make smarter food choices without having to go hungry

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

THE TRANSITION from the end of December to the start of January is just like any other time when the night of one day flows into the morning of another. Yet, because we have designated Jan. 1 as the start of a new year, something magical happens when the sun rises on that day. We feel like the "sins" of the past year are washed away and we have a clean slate to start all over again. Yes, it's that time of the year—the time to make New Year's resolutions. And tops on many people's list is exercise and weight loss.

But too many people make overly-ambitious resolutions only to find themselves making the very same ones the next year. This is because they think the only way to get fit and lose weight is to make drastic changes. True, the radical approach works quite well for some people but if you are tired of making promises to yourself every January only to break those promises by March, then maybe you need a more gradual approach to change your exercise and eating habits.

Here is a list of just four small changes you can make to become more physically active and cut down on calories. You will not see a dramatic result in your weight, appearance or performance immediately, but you can reap big results at the end of the year. And best of all, since the changes are so small, it won't cost you much in terms of time or effort.

Climb stairs

You burn approximately 8-10 calories a minute when you climb the stairs instead of 1.7 calories a minute standing still inside an elevator or on an escalator. Assuming you accumulate 5 minutes of stair climbing a day, you can burn 50 extra calories daily and lose about 5 pounds by the end of the year. You will also be strengthening your bones and leg muscles because climbing stairs is a form of resistance exercise as well as a cardiovascular activity.

So the next time you have to go up one or two floors, take the stairs instead of the elevator. You'll actually save time and get fit at the same time. As your heart and legs get used to the physical effort of stair climbing, you will eventually be able to go up five to eight floors straight without getting winded or feeling like your muscles are burning.

Just make sure the stairwell of the building you are in is a safe place to go up and down. Safety should always come first.

Walk while you talk

By choosing to pace around while talking on your cell phone or cordless phone instead of sitting down you can burn 4 calories a minute instead of just 1 calorie. Considering the amount of time we spend talking on our phones, we could all burn a significant amount of calories in one year without even trying. If you did this for just 10 minutes every day, you could lose 4 pounds at the end of 2004.

Of course, use your common sense and do not, I repeat, do not use this technique while answering text messages.

Choose water

By choosing to drink water instead of sweetened drinks like soft drinks and commercial iced teas or lemonades, you save 90 calories for every 8 oz (1 regular-sized glass). You could lose 9 pounds in one year just by making this small change in your drinking habits.

Many people don't realize how many calories they are consuming when they drink high-calorie drinks. This might help: A cookie has 50 calories. A small brownie has 100 calories. A slice of cake has 250 calories. Now visualize: A 12-ounce soft drink is the same as three cookies. A fruit-based smoothie is two brownies. A tall mocha Frapuccino without whipped cream is one slice of cake.

Put your coffee on a diet

In this day and age of a café in every corner, it is not unusual for people to have one or two cups of specialty coffee a day. By changing from whole milk to nonfat milk, you can save 30 calories on a short Cappuccino, 50 calories for a tall and 60 calories for a grande. You could lose 3 pounds in one year by changing from a short whole milk Cappuccino to a short nonfat one.

Every little bit counts

There are many other ways to burn and shave off calories without having to go to the gym or go on a diet, so get creative and devise a system to become "inefficient" with your activities of daily living (park at the opposite end of the mall from your destination) and make smarter food choices without having to go hungry (steamed rice instead of fried). Every little bit counts and will add up at the end of the year to a fitter, slimmer, and healthier you.

For past articles/exercises and suggestions for future columns, go to www.tinajuanfitness.info.

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New outlook, new body, new life

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

AS WE end the year, it's the perfect time to start anew. Endings are but a doorway to renewal. So as you bid farewell to the old year, know that opportunities for growth await you in the next.

Here are some things you can do everyday for the first 12 days of the new year, with corresponding affirmations to help you change as part of your personal self-expression.

Jan. 1. A new attitude should set the tone for the coming months. Last year's successes should be topped by greater triumphs this year, and last year's failures should not be forgotten, for they are lessons too. Rather, they should be left behind and not carried into the new year.

Example: You did well as a student/homemaker/boss, but there is always room for improvement. Your marriage/love relationship had its tough times, but your resolve as a couple to be more loving to each other will be given more priority this year. Your extra 10 pounds attests to your lack of physical discipline and you will do something about it.

Your affirmation: "Yes!"

Jan. 2. A new beginning requires a first step. Don't be overwhelmed by your goals; take it one step at a time or one day at a time. Tell yourself, "I begin now."

Take a piece of paper. Write down all the things you would like to start doing, from beautifying your home to enhancing your looks to improving your bank balance. If certain aspects of your life seemed to have been shaken up last year, remember that a shake-up is good. It sheds the dead leaves off your tree.

Jan. 3. Ending bad habits and bad behavior should be a priority. Make a long and hard assessment of yourself. End your insecurities and uncertainties now. Or you might end up in a dead end.

Example: Stop your tendency to throw everything into your closets or refrigerator. Clean them out as a major project.

Your battle cry: "Stop!"

Jan. 4. Your lifestyle must be top-of-mind from now on. It will be your new conscience. Allow it to be that little voice inside you whispering "that's good for you" or "that's bad for you." Every time you scan a buffet table for food choices, tune into that lifestyle channel inside your head to pick out only those which are healthy for you. Or whenever someone asks you to overindulge in alcohol or sugar, listen to your conscience.

Program your mind, heart and body to think along the lines of drive and determination. When a health regimen, life plan or a set of work goals is in place, set them into motion and follow through.

Your call-to-action word: "Live!"

Jan. 5. Positive self-talk is not a practice of the mindless. It involves facing yourself in the mirror and actually engaging yourself in honest conversation. This allows you to develop a firm resolve over pending issues in your life which you once preferred to forget (painful or exhausting as they may have been).

Your affirmation: "Act!"

Jan. 6. Declare yourself your new best friend. As such, you cannot and will not lie to your heart, mind, God, family and country. From now on, you will only give your best new buddy everything that is healthy, good and beneficial.

Say "Best!" to help you along this goal.

Jan. 7. Change your environment. If your old set of friends is not into renewal, get closer instead to people with the same likes and outlook in life. It will be difficult to maintain and sustain friendships with those who do not agree or support your life goals.

Here are some things you can do every day for the first 12 days of the year, with corresponding affirmations

Your battle cry: "Change!"

Jan. 8. Surrender to the power of God to guide and enlighten you. If you believe that life is only fueled and directed by your sheer will, think again. There is a greater will that directs all of creation. Acknowledge this truth and surrender to it.

Yes, "yield!"

Jan. 9. Love yourself. Don't wait for others to motivate, inspire or influence you. The creative spirit lives inside you. Your storehouse of energy is not found outside of yourself, but within. Give without considering the rewards.

Your affirmation: "Love!"

Jan. 10. Keep still. Practice the art of silence. It is only in the stillness of your mind and heart that divine inspiration will come.

Jan. 11. Revive a dream. Everyone has an unfulfilled dream or two. It's time for your dream to be born again. Give it wings and command it to "fly!"

Jan. 12. Give thanks. Gratitude is the secret of abundance. The more you are sincerely grateful, the more blessings will come your way.

Say "thanks" all the time.

Thai herbal wrap

Ingredients:
Ginger, 2 tbsps
Turmeric, 2 tbsps
Rice, ¼ c, pounded and ground
Water, 1 c

(You can get ginger, turmeric and rice in powdered form in the grocery.)

Ground the ginger and turmeric, and mix them with the rice and warm water to make a thick paste. Massage the paste over your body in circular motions. Be sure to pay special attention to the drier areas such as your knees, elbows and feet, or areas with fatty deposits such as thighs, bottom and upper arms.

Leave the paste on for 20 minutes, then rinse off (with a loofah if your prefer).

(Source: Spa Style Asia, courtesy of Mogambo Springs, The Spa at Plantation Bay)

Love and light!

THE T-MAC 3 is a performance shoe that meets all the needs and requirements of a professional player

TMAC McGrady may not be able to leap tall buildings with a single bounce but his T-Mac makes him feel he is capable of anything.

The soles of a hardcourt hero

NBA superstar Tracy "TMAC" McGrady and Adidas scored again when they recently launched the T-Mac 3.

The highly anticipated signature shoe of the current NBA scoring champion follows the T-Mac, launched in February 2002 and the T-Mac 2, launched in November 2002. Both of those shoes went on to be the No. 1 selling sports shoes in the United States.

A performance shoe that meets all the needs and requirements of a professional player, the T-Mac 3 is an evolution of the original T-Mac—more refined, further developed, but reliable as ever.

The T-Mac 3 has a synthetic "alligator" print leather along the outside of the shoe to the toe then wraps around into a shell-inspired structure on the inside area. The lacing system reflects a unique asymmetrical design element, with inner loops exposed and outer loops hidden. The Adidas three stripes are more dominant on the lateral side and subdued on the medial side. A double construction around the collar enhances fit and an extended torsion plate in the heel adds more stability and arch support.

"It is a great feeling to have your own shoe. Each year I have worked with the Adidas design team to make the shoe even better. I can tell you that the T-Mac 3 is the best one yet," added TMAC.

TMAC won his first NBA scoring title in 2002-03, averaging 32.1 points per game. He also averaged 6.5 rebounds per game, 5.5 assists per game and 1.65 steals per game, solidifying his position as one of the top all-around players in the game. TMAC was also named to the All-NBA First Team for the second consecutive season and is a three-time NBA All-Star.

Lifetime contract

TMAC and Adidas signed a lifetime contract in April 2002. The deal, which is for the duration of McGrady's basketball career and beyond, is the most significant contract Adidas has ever signed with a professional athlete.

"This is an unprecedented deal for Adidas," stated Erich Stamminger, Member of the Executive Board of Adidas-Salomon AG, responsible for Global Marketing. "Tracy is one of the most exciting and respected players in the NBA and we are impressed by his passion both on and off the court."

Along with Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett, TMAC helps form Adidas' "big three." The three appeared on the cover of Kicks, Slam Magazine's "sneaker bible," each wearing the adidas shoe that they will feature in the upcoming season, TMAC in the new T-Mac 3 and Duncan and Garnett in the a3 Superstar Ultra, set to be launched in January 2004.

All three players have been named to the US Olympic Basketball Team in Athens 2004.

TMAC says it feels great to have his own shoe

NBA scoring champion launches the "best one yet," the T-Mac 3.

TMAC and white T-Mac make for a winning combination

Star-studded cancer benefit

LOUIS Vuitton, with Hollywood stars Jennifer Connelly and Salma Hayek, hosted the first ever benefit for The United Cancer Front (UCF).

The exclusive Louis Vuitton UCF gala was held in a private estate in Holmby Hills, Los Angeles, California.

Celebrity guests included Russell Crowe, Sylvester Stallone, Eve, Dylan McDermott, Rachel Weisz, Katie Holmes, Chris Klein, Josh Lucas, Stephanie Seymour, Amber Valetta, Rob Lowe, Paul Bettany, Lauren Graham, Eric McCormack, Peter Krause, Fred Durst, Laura San Giacomo, Daisy Fuentes, Janelle Maloney, Shiva Rose, Henry Simmons, Freddy Rodriguez, Maria Cooper Janis and Byron Janis, Kenny G., Bill Paxton, Darren Aronofsky, John Larroquette, Madeleine Stowe, Brian Benben, among others.

Also there were entertainment personalities Suzanne and Bob Wright, Jena and Michael King, Jonathan Dolgeri, Stacy Snider, Jeff Zucker, Noelle Lippman and Dick Wolf, Jamie and Steve Tisch, Hedi and Alex Gores, Irena and Mike Medavoy and Nathalie and Maurice Marciano.

Grammy winning recording artist Seal did a special musical number.

Tables for the event cost $10,000-50,000. A special auction was held for the $28,000, one-of-a-kind white gold and bejeweled charms designed by the evening's co-hosts, Jennifer Connelly, Salma Hayek and Renee Zellweger, on a single white gold bracelet.

The funds raised, which amounted to $1 million, goes to the UCF.

DomPerignon provided the champagne while Moet Hennessy provided full bar service. Renowned chef Wolfgang Puck catered the event.

Founded by Lilly Tartikoff with chief scientific Director Dr. Dennis J. Slamon, UCF aims to develop breakthrough cancer therapies by raising unrestricted funding for cutting-edge scientific research, and to disseminate the most reliable and up-to-date information on cancers.

Dr. Slamon has selected 35 scientists from around the United States to share cancer research with one another.

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In the Philippines, Louis Vuitton is at the ground floor of Greenbelt 4, Ayala Center, Makati. Visit www.vuitton.com.

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The diplomat who remembers his past lives

(Part I)

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

CARLOS A.L. de Carvalho is a Brazilian lawyer and career diplomat presently holding the position of Minister Councilor at the Embassy of Brazil in Manila. His previous diplomatic assignments included Norway, Mexico, Turkey, North Korea, South Korea and Thailand.

But that is not the most interesting aspect of Carlos' biodata. In fact, we can't find it there. What's more interesting about him is that he is clairvoyant, a healer, a trance medium and a yogi, aside from being an antique collector, a voice instructor and an accomplished tenor. And he can vividly remember several of his past incarnations on earth.

I first met Carlos de Carvalho a year ago during the birthday celebration of New Age guru, George Sison, in Makati. Earlier, a mutual friend, Cecile Tamura, tried to introduce us to each other because of our common interests in esoteric and paranormal subjects, but fate has a way of arranging meetings with people in unexpected ways.

In subsequent meetings, I discovered some extraordinary things about this ordinary-looking diplomat. What fascinated me most was his vivid spontaneous recollection of his past lives. When I interviewed him at his sprawling 1,000-sq-m house in Dasmariñas Village, Makati, he showed me his huge collection of priceless antiques, artifacts and paintings from various parts of the world.

I saw rare and original statues and objects from the Maya, Aztec and Olmec civilizations which I had only read about in books. He has rare original paintings of Salvador Dali, Amorsolo and other great world artists hanging all over the walls of his house. There are also many statutes of Buddha from Thailand, India and China.

Discovering his gifts

It was in his early 20s as an air force cadet that Carlos began seeing his past incarnations and his connection with people close to him. He would see events in his mind like on a TV screen.

He thought at first that he was losing his mind. So, he went to see the chaplain, a Father Geraldo, who had the rank of major. When Carlos confessed to him he could remember clearly certain people he had met in this life who were also in his previous lives, the priest told him he was merely imagining things because there was no such thing as reincarnation.

"He lent me a booklet written by a Dominican priest disproving reincarnation," said Carlos. "I read the booklet several times."

After a week he went back to the priest, thanked him for the book and returned it, saying, "This book has proven to me that reincarnation is a fact!"

"How come?" asked the shocked priest.

"Read page 2, now 16, now 32, now 36," he told the priest. After reading those pages mentioned by Carlos, the priest exclaimed, "That's why I always say religion is right; it is religious people who are wrong!"

"What were in those pages that made you believe they proved reincarnation?" I curiously asked.

"They were quotations both from the Old and New Testaments indicating belief in reincarnation but interpreted in different ways by the Church," explained Carlos. "For example, the statement of Jesus saying, 'I am telling you the truth, before Abraham was, I am.' Also the part in Matthew where Jesus said, 'Elijah has already come but people did not recognize him,' referring to John the Baptist. Also that part where he declared with certainty that John is Elijah whose coming was predicted.' "

Carlos said the Catholic Church interprets this by saying what Christ meant was that John was like Elijah in his manner of speaking.

"But Christ never said John was like Elijah. It was very clear He recognized Elijah as the former incarnation of John the Baptist," Carlos explained.

Then Carlos said there was the Biblical quotation regarding the confrontation between the highly learned man, Nicodemus, and Jesus, where Jesus said, "Unless a man be born again he will not enter the kingdom of heaven." And Nicodemus asked, "You mean to tell me I have to go back to the womb of my mother?"

Jesus replied that if he, Nicodemus, who is a learned man, cannot understand him, how does he expect the multitude to understand? Carlos said the Catholic Church explains this passage to refer to the Sacrament of Baptism where a man is born again by virtue of water and Holy Spirit. "But Christ never said that!" he said.

Indeed, as the American psychic and prophet Edgar Cayce said, "One can read reincarnation into the Bible and another can read it out again."

And the Great Russian mathematician and mystic, P. D. Ouspensky, pointed out that "the gospels cannot be fully understood without esoteric knowledge."

Vivid memories

Being a Catholic who studied in a Catholic school in a Catholic country like Brazil, Carlos did not accept reincarnation at first. In fact, as a leader of the Catholic youth movement in school he wrote and spoke against the concept, and even tried to disprove it.

"But," said Carlos, "I could not convince myself." The memories of his past lives were so vivid they often haunted him.

After he finished his training at the air force, Carlos studied law preparatory to a diplomatic career. "I kept this question about reincarnation at the back of my mind. But it never left me."

"What triggers those past life memories of yours?" I asked Carlos.

"The memory is often triggered by meeting someone I've met in a previous life. This included a former colleague of mine who, the first time we met, called me 'father.' "

"Maybe he thought you were a priest," I said.

"No, he meant a real biological father. And I saw him also as my own son in my past incarnation."

After completion of his military stint with the air force, he underwent training for the diplomatic corps when he passed the qualifying examinations. It was during this time that he observed something strange about the behavior of people toward him. People he hardly knew would voluntarily start telling him the most intimate facts about their lives for no reason at all. And one time this got him into trouble.

"A politician," Carlos recalled, "opened up to me the most intimate details of his life that he became afraid I would use it against him. So he made false accusations against me to prevent me from becoming a diplomat. He accused me of having personality conflicts. That's why I had to take those 57 psychological tests to prove I was normal. I passed all those tests, and the famous psychologist who administered the tests concluded I had perfect control of reality."

Although he passed all the required tests, the fact that he had to prove his sanity brought Carlos nightmares. He could not sleep and suffered from depression. A friend then suggested he study yoga and referred him to a teacher.

"I was given the wrong name and wrong address, but still I found him. He was an Argentinean who studied yoga under an Indian swami. And when I went to him for the first time, he greeted me with open arms, saying, 'Welcome! I have been waiting for you. I only have 24 years on earth and during this time I will teach you everything I know.' "

Yoga and spiritism

And so Carlos, the lawyer, singer and career diplomat soon became a yoga master. He recalled that when his yoga teacher opened up his library to him, the first book he took out of the shelf was "Isis Unveiled," the two 2-volume masterpiece written by Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society.

This led him to further exposure to the esoteric and spiritist traditions of his country, which is a far cry from his chosen profession. Soon he was introduced to the two biggest spiritist groups in Brazil, the Candomble and Umbanda, which where inspired by African spiritism.

Strange things again began to manifest themselves. The first time he attended this group, for example, the head of the mediums would take him by the hand, lead him across the hall to sit in a special place of honor. He couldn't understand why they always did that since he was obviously a stranger to them.

Exposure to Candomble and Umbanda got him deep into spiritism, which was very active and popular in Brazil and throughout Latin America. A friend introduced him to a spiritist fraternity and he joined it as a member. Barely three months later, he became the group's vice president.

This spiritist group emphasized healing as a main mediumistic activity and Carlos became a powerful mediumistic healer with the help of his seven spirit guides. He stayed with that group for seven years.

"I left because they wanted to make me a saint," he said. This was specially after he had levitated to the ceiling during one meeting which was witnessed by almost 200 people. He also healed several terminal patients of cancer which medical doctors could not explain.

"I felt that if I had stayed with that group, my ego would be bloated and my spiritual growth would stop," said Carlos.

Next week: Carlos reveals his past lives

Address letters to this column to 308 Prince Plaza I, 106 Legaspi St., Greenbelt, Makati City. Call 8107245 or 8926806. E-mail jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://j.licauco.tripod.com. Listen to my DZMM radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.

Street kids enjoy Christmas treat

WE'RE together: Lara Lua, Globelines brand manager; Racquel Cagurangan, Globequest marketing services head; and Alex Compton are all smiles, so are the kids.

EMPLOYEES of Innove, which is made up of Globelines and Globequest, shared their blessings with 400 street kids in the Makati Coliseum recently.

Gil Genio, chief executive officer of Innove Communications, led the gift-giving as he said Christmas was about giving to others and sharing one's blessings.

Beneficiaries of Innove's "Maki-Pasko Tayo 2003" were kids from various foundations, shelters and nongovernment organizations in the city, including the Don Bosco Youth Center, Don Bosco Pugad, Virlanie Foundation and Bahay Lingkod Community. Genio said they felt even their clients would be happy that the company was sharing the season with street children and abandoned kids.

Clients of Innove's business units—Globelines and Globequest—can share the fun and warmth of the affair through Christmas cards designed by Cartwheel Foundation with a picture of the kids.

"Maki-Pasko Tayo 2003" gift packages contained rice donation by Innove employees, T-shirts from J&J, clothes from Avon and toys from Philcom. The kids were also treated to meals that were served by McDonalds's mascots Hamburglar, Grimace, Birdie and Ronald McDonald.

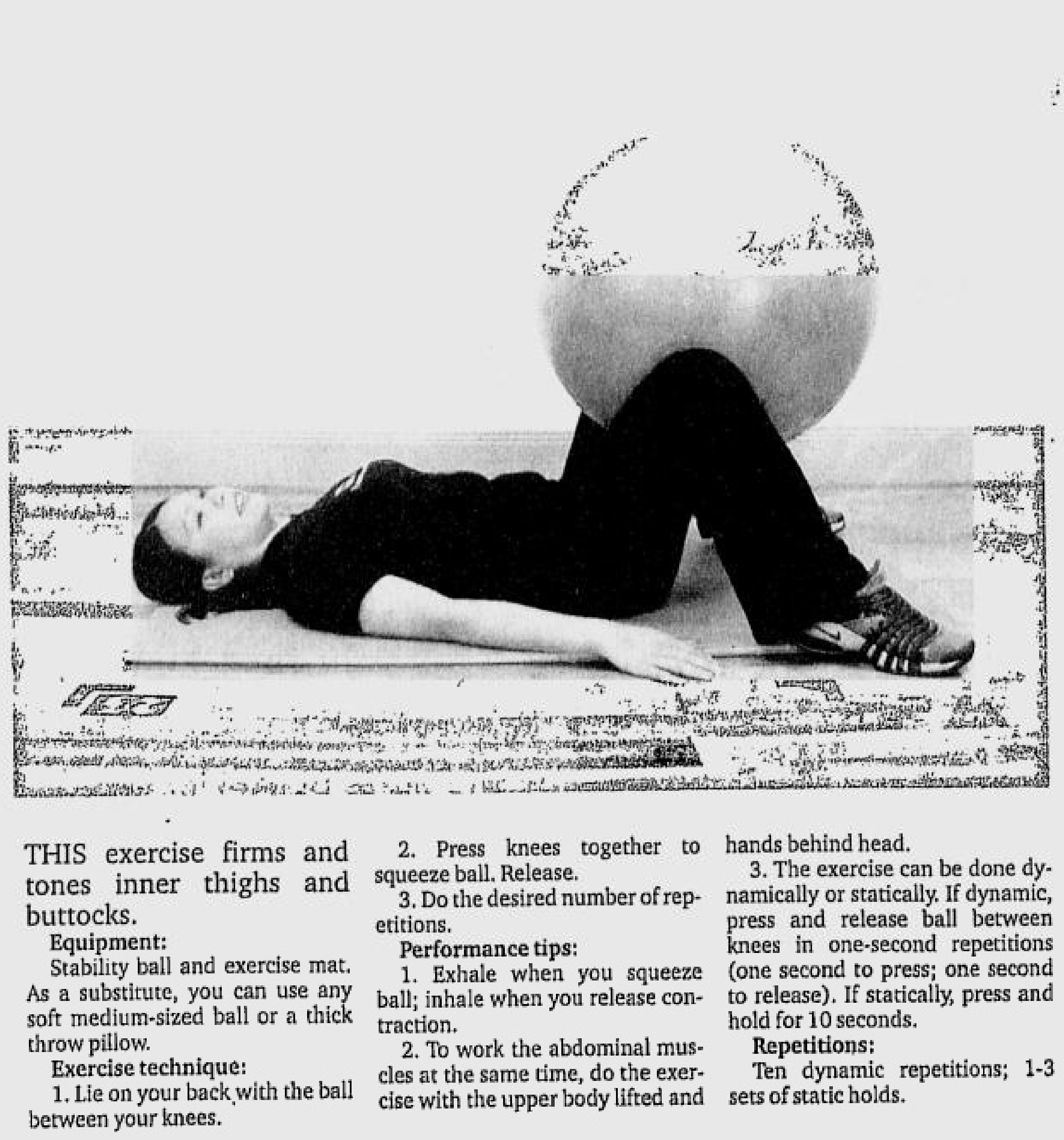
Celebrities Amy Perez, Agot Isidro and Alex Compton attended the event.

Fr. Sonny Arevalo said that although people worked to earn a living, they made a life by what they gave.

GLOBEQUEST head Boboy Romero poses with Don Bosco Youth Center kids Rose and Jovel.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Inner thigh squeeze with stability ball



THIS exercise firms and tones inner thighs and buttocks.

Equipment:

Stability ball and exercise mat. As a substitute, you can use any soft medium-sized ball or a thick throw pillow.

Exercise technique:

1. Lie on your back with the ball between your knees.

2. Press knees together to squeeze ball. Release.

3. Do the desired number of repetitions.

Performance tips:

1. Exhale when you squeeze ball; inhale when you release contraction.

2. To work the abdominal muscles at the same time, do the exercise with the upper body lifted and hands behind head.

3. The exercise can be done dynamically or statically. If dynamic, press and release ball between knees in one-second repetitions (one second to press; one second to release). If statically, press and hold for 10 seconds.

Repetitions:

Ten dynamic repetitions; 1-3 sets of static holds.

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